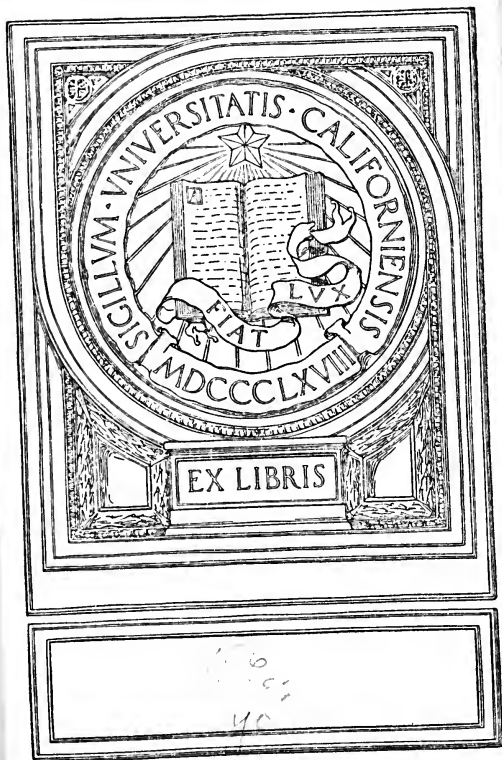
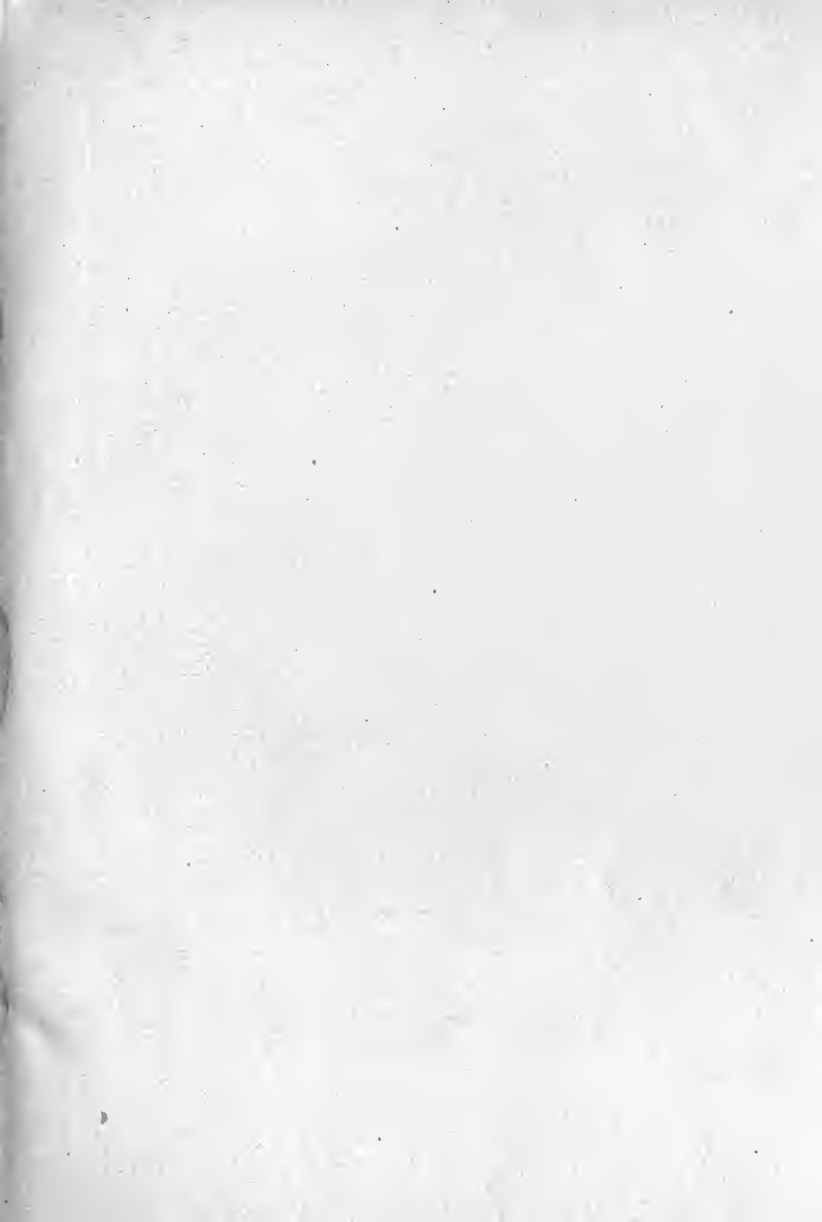


THE YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS









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JACOB'S AFFAIR WITH "CROSSGRAIN." — Page 56.

The Trail Hunters Series.



THE YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS' SERIES

THE
YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS

OR

HAL AND NED IN THE MARVELLOUS
COUNTRY

COMPLETING

THE YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS' SERIES

BY

SAMUEL WOODWORTH COZZENS

AUTHOR OF "CROSSING THE QUICKSANDS" "THE MARVELLOUS COUNTRY"
"THE YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS" ETC.

Illustrated

THE
YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS
HAL AND NED IN THE MARVELLOUS
COUNTRY
BOSTON

LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS
NEW YORK CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM

1883

THE YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS' SERIES.

3 Volumes. Illustrated.

1. THE YOUNG TRAIL HUNTERS.
2. CROSSING THE QUICKSANDS.
3. THE YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS.

LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS,
BOSTON.

TO VIRGIL
ALPHEUS

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THE YOUNG SILVER SEEKERS.

CHAPTER I.

TIRED OF INACTION. — ASPIRATIONS TO BE RICH. — HAL HYDE AND NED BROWN. — A YOUTHFUL LOVER. — THE ABANDONED SILVER MINES. — A MAGNIFICENT SCHEME OF TRAVEL. — MORE MEN WANTED. — A CARGO OF CUT-THROATS. — THE CREAM OF THE CROWD. — A USELESS VISIT.

WHAT'S the use of rusting out here taking care of horses and cattle, and occasionally killing a bear, when we might dig up a few tons of silver, and make a fortune?" demanded Hal Hyde, as we sat in front of our comfortable house on the Buena Vista ranch. "Don't you think it is about time to pull up stakes, judge, and go on that tramp?"

"It may be time, but we are very comfortable here, in our present quarters, especially as the news comes that the Apaches are on another rampage," I replied, quietly, for the subject had been brought up about every day since we came in from "Crossing the Quicksands."

"We might get as rich as that old fellow we read about in the classics, and settle down in New York,

or some other eastern village, where we could have all the comforts and luxuries of modern civilization," added Hal.

"Modern civilization, to young fellows like you, Hal, means beer, cigars, and theatre-going every night in the week, not excepting Sundays, to say nothing of worse dissipation."

"I would rather live out here in the wilderness than in New York, though I don't think I should greatly object to a few tons of silver," said Ned Brown.

Ned and Hal had crossed the continent, and made a long journey after cattle, with me, near the Pacific coast. Each had his peculiarities, and both had thus far exhibited a strong taste for the wild life of the plains, and for roaming among the rugged mountains of the Cordilleras.

We had agreed upon a trip into Mexico ; but when I looked over the map of the country I had talked about travelling through, it did not seem quite so practicable as it had without the map. It was an immense territory to traverse, including the arid desert as well as a region of partial civilization.

I found it quite impossible to make the extended trip I had laid out in Mexico, and I concluded that it would not be prudent for me to make any very definite plans for the journey. The Indians were in an uneasy frame of mind, and were making no little trouble to travellers across the country.

Besides, I learned, some years ago, that a man is

more independent when he has no fixed destination. I intended to go into Mexico if the circumstances would permit; but it would have made a quarrel at Buena Vista if I had suggested that we might not enter the domain of our sister Republic, for Hal was impatient to visit Chihuahua, where the beautiful Juanita lived.

Though Hal was still only a boy, he was fascinated with the fair girl, and I was not at all satisfied with his premature devotion. Ned Brown laughed every time Hal alluded to the Mexican province in which Juanita lived; and he alluded to it not less than twenty times a day on the average.

It was time for us to be going if we went that year. Though I had been through the wilds of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona, visiting nearly every part of the two latter, I realized that my own love of adventure had not been extinguished. It would be mean and false for me to say that I was going for the sake of the boys, for after our rest, since we returned from the quicksands, I felt an almost irresistible desire to resume my wanderings in the wilds of the southern range of territories.

I was financially in better condition to fit out a party than I had ever been before. Business had prospered with us, and I thought I might make an investment in some of the wild regions of Arizona that would yield a handsome return in the future. What the boys had said about silver was not wholly their own idea. We had talked a great deal about

the richness of some of the silver mines of Mexico, and about some that had been abandoned, according to tradition, and the location of them lost to any living persons.

If we should happen to stumble upon one of these mines, or discover it through our investigations in the region that was known to contain them, it would be a fortune apiece for a score of us. I was as willing to make a million in working a silver mine as in raising cattle and horses.

My experience in the wild regions where the mountains kiss the skies, and the cañons seem to lay hold on the place we read of, but do not call by its full name in polite society, had fully informed me in regard to the needs of travellers in the mountains and in the desert, as well as in the region split up and cracked into honeycomb by volcanic action. I was better fitted than ever before to attend to the duty of fitting out a party.

Without telling the boys what I was thinking about, I sat in our house, or on the piazza, and made out a list of what I thought we wanted to take with us. I spent several days in making out this list, in studying the maps, and in devising plans for the conduct of the party. The disturbances among the Indians made them an important element in the consideration of the subject. We must be strong enough to defend ourselves, and I had not much confidence in the herdsmen, *vaqueros*, and other men who were available for the service in which we needed them.

Either Sile Carter or Jerry Vance was worth twenty of them in a brush with the savages. These two veterans were to be of the party, but I wanted eight or ten more just like them, and I hoped to be able to obtain several of their kind. At any rate, I decided that I would not start upon the enterprise until I could make up a party of at least ten, besides the boys and myself, with "greasers" and Indians enough to drive the teams and do the drudgery of the camp.

When I had arranged my plans, I called in Sile Carter, Jerry Vance and the boys, and laid it before them. It was really quite magnificent in its details compared with any of my former trips. The veterans and the boys opened their eyes as they listened to my description of what I intended to do.

"We shall go it like Xerxes in his expeditions," said Ned, laughing. "Eleven men and two boys, besides a regiment of hangers-on."

"About twenty-five in all; don't make it any bigger than it is," I added.

"Air you go'n to take the contrack to whip out the whole Apache tribe, jedge?" asked Sile, with a queer smile on his bronzed face.

"I shall not quarrel with the Apaches, or with any other tribe of Indians, if I can avoid it," I replied. "We are going with an object in view, and that object is not to fight the Indians."

"What do you want of eight more men, then?" queried Jerry, with a broad grin on his face.

"I'm not going to run away from the Apaches, if they come across our track, unless it is convenient to do so. There is a certain region of country I desire to explore; and I am going to explore it, whether the Indians tell me I may or not," I added. "But I am going to keep the peace with them if I can."

"I cal'late you mean the piece of 'em called the scalp," laughed Sile Carter.

"No, I don't; we will fight if we must, and avoid fighting if we can," I replied. "We want eight more men, at least: and the question is, where shall we find them. I know of two I can get, I think, and the other six must be found. I want men who have brains rather than manners, who can split a ball on a jack-knife as far as he can see the knife; who know the woods and have wrestled with bears; in a word, men like Sile and Jerry."

"You don't expect to find six more sech chaps as we be, dew you, jedge?" inquired Sile, pleased with the implied compliment I paid him.

"Not just such fellows, but as near like you as can be had. You must take a hand in looking them up."

Horses were in demand the next morning, and we scoured the country and the town in search of the men we wanted. Ned went with me to San Diego. We happened to be at the port when a vessel from San Francisco put in, short of water. It had a motley crowd of passengers on board, consisting of hunters, trappers, *voyageurs*, and miners, who were bound to Acapulco.

I found that several of them, after I had talked with them, were the very men I wanted. At the time of which I write, the French were trying to keep Maximilian on the throne of Mexico. A speculator had lured these men into his service on the pretence that they were to be officers in the patriot army of Juarez.

On the voyage they discovered that they were to become plunderers of either the Church or the Patriot party, whichever one happened to have possession of the treasures, for the benefit of their employer. In fact, they were to be organized banditti.

The better portion of them revolted at the thought of such work, though the majority were willing to engage in pillage and robbery if it would pay. A couple of those who had been deceived by the speculator insisted on being put ashore at some port in the state of California; and when this was refused, they started the plugs from the water casks, and made it necessary to put into San Diego.

Don Jose, the speculator, had done his best to prevent any of his recruits from landing at the town, but half a dozen of them had fought their way into the boat and come ashore. I found them on the beach, and from them learned the particulars I have given. In five minutes more I had engaged the whole six to report for duty at Buena Vista ranch the next morning.

I was told that I could get a dozen more out of the band of adventurers on board of the brig. As I had

not much faith that Sile and Jerry would be able to get any such men as we wanted in their search, I decided to go off to the vessel, and see what I could do. I hired a boat, and Ned and I went off to the brig. As we came near her, we found the adventurers on the rail and in the rigging, looking to see what they could of the shore.

"I don't want any of that crowd, Ned," said I, when we had pulled around the brig, and taken a survey of the passengers. "All the cut-throats of the Pacific shore are among them."

"They are a hard-looking crowd," replied Ned.

Just then, half a dozen shots were heard, and one or two balls struck our boat. Half a dozen of the villains shouted to us to come on board and take them ashore: they would shoot us if we did not. We pulled for the shore with all our might, and soon got out of range of their weapons. The firing seemed to be from sheer wantonness.

"You have got the cream of the whole crowd, judge," said Ned, when we were out of reach of their bullets.

"It will be rough on the new empire of Mexico when those villains get there. I don't wonder that the men I engaged wanted to get out of their company."

We reached the shore, and rode back to Buena Vista. I was satisfied with what we had done for one day, and we waited for the return of Sile, Jerry and Hal.

CHAPTER II.

HAL TAKES A SOMBRE VIEW OF THE PROSPECTS. — ARRIVAL OF THE RECRUITS. — EMILE PONT, THE VOYAGEUR. — JACOB YÄGER, THE INDIAN FIGHTER. — A FRIENDLY FIGHT. — A BEAR-FACED INTERRUPTION OF THE PASTIME. — A SINGULAR RECONCILIATION. — AN EX-CIRCUS-RIDER. — THREE BALLS IN THE SAME HOLE.

THE two veterans and Hal had gone off in different directions; and the youthful lover was the first to return. He reported that he had visited several settlers, but they refused to leave their little estates for any such purpose as the young hunter indicated.

"You won't find any such men as you describe, judge," said Hal, disgusted at his want of success. "There are no such persons in this part of the country."

I had told Ned not to say anything about the old trappers and hunters I had engaged, for I expected just such reports as Hal had now brought in. We expected a little fun the next morning when our recruits presented themselves.

"We can't go without the men, Hal," I replied decidedly.

"I don't see what we want a whole regiment for," growled Hal. "We have fought the Indians, and given a good account of ourselves, and we can do it again. For my part, I don't believe in taking a whole army with us. We muster five, besides the *vaqueros* and the Indians we shall have; and I think that is enough.

"Do you think so, Hal?" I asked, very seriously.

"Yes, I do! I think it is all nonsense to take such a crowd along with us."

"Well, Hal, you have a right to your own opinion," I added.

"Which means that it is of no account," snapped the young hunter. "The whole of it is we shall not go at all, for the men are not to be had."

"There are three men riding in beyond the garden," interposed Ned, who saw that his young companion was in a frame of mind to be saucy, as he sometimes was. "One of them is Sile Carter, and the others are strangers."

"Probably Sile has raised two recruits for our army," I added.

"What's two men? You want ten of them," snarled Hal, whose thoughts were down in Chihuahua, and he was thinking only of getting there.

"If Jerry brings in as many more, it will make four," added Ned. "We may make up the number by next week, or the week after."

"I shall give up going at all!" exclaimed Hal.

"All right; you needn't go if you don't want to,

Hal. I shall be glad to have you stay at the ranch, and look after the stock, and attend to the orange-trees and the bananas."

At this moment Sile dashed into the yard, followed by two horsemen. The latter rode jaded nags, thin in flesh, though they evidently had considerable spirit when in good condition. Both of them appeared to be foreigners, and one looked like an Irishman.

"Well, jedge, I fetched two human critters; and they are made of the real stuff," said Sile, as he threw himself from his horse. "One's a Frenchman, and t'other is a Dutchman."

Sile seemed to be delighted with the success that had attended his mission, and he looked about to see if there were any other strangers about the ranch. It occurred to me at once that neither of the recruits he had brought would answer the purpose, and I wondered what the down-easter was thinking about when he picked up such men.

"This man is Emile Pont. That's the way he spelled it out to me, but that ain't the way he speaks it," said Sile, proceeding to introduce his men.

"Emile Pont," added the Frenchman, pronouncing the name properly.

"He is a v'yer," added Sile, looking at his prize with admiration.

"A *voyageur*, monsieur!" explained Emile. "I have sairve wit de 'Udson Bay Compagnie tree year."

"Just so ; a *voyageur*," I added, changing my opinion entirely in regard to the man, for there are none braver, more enduring, more skilful in woodcraft, or more cheerful and obedient than the Canadian *voyageur*, whose life has been spent in hunting, fishing and trapping.

"All right, jedge ; he's your man, every time. T'other is a Dutchman," continued Sile, pointing to the second prize.

"I am no more a Dutchman as he is a Frenchman !" exclaimed the second man. "He don't know the difference mit a German as a Dutchman."

The man doubled up and laughed as though it was a capital joke ; and he enjoyed it, if nobody else did.

"Then you are a German," I added, in order to encourage the man.

"What is your tarnal name?" asked Sile, perplexed as he tried to recall it. "'Tain't no sort o' use to spell out these fellers' names, for arter you've done it, ten to one, they'll call it sunthin else. It's a tarnal pigeon talk no Christian critter can understand ; and he's got to have his tongue split afore he can speak it."

"My name is Jacob Yäger (Yahcob Yegger)," said the German, laughing all the time, and he seemed to have a talent for laughing.

"Do you hear that?" demanded Sile. "Can any feller say that without tying his tongue in a hard knot?"

"In English his name is the same as Jacob Hunter,"

added Hal, who had studied German. "I think we had better call him Jake Hunter, and that will save Sile Carter's tongue from being yanked out by the roots."

"*Jahrwohl! Sie sprechen Deutsch, nicht wahr?*" demanded Jacob, rushing up to Hal, his face sparkling with delight.

"*Nein; nicht viel. Ich habe sie vergessen,*" replied Hal, and this proved to be as far as he could go, greatly to the disappointment of the recruit.

"But he's a reg'lar rip-snorter, if he is a Dutchman — ain't you, Jake?" added Sile.

When questioned in regard to his antecedents, and his fitness for the position in which he was wanted, he said his father had immigrated to this country and taken a farm in Minnesota, that all the family but himself had been massacred by the Indians, and since this terrible event he had devoted himself to fighting the savages. He had been a trapper and hunter in Oregon for seven years.

"I cal'late you don't know how I come acrost these two fellers, jedge," added Sile. "I gi'n up findin' anybody that would go with you, and started for home."

"Well, how happened it, Sile?"

"I was ridin' along sort o' slow through the woods, when all to once I come suddenly on two fellers fightin' like all possessed. Them fellers was the Frenchman and the Dutchman. Their horses was hitched to a tree, and they was poundin one another

as if hammers didn't cost nothin'. I held up and waited to see how they was comin' out, for I don't never like to interfere in a friendly fight when things goes on fair."

"It was a friendly fight, was it?"

"So fur's I could see, it was, jedge; they didn't have no knives nor no shootin' irons o' no kind. They was doin' it with the bare fists, in a civilized and Christian way. I was cur'ous to know which was comin' out on top, when a pesky cinnament bear rushed in and begun to scratch both on 'em. I didn't have no patience with that bear."

"Why didn't you shoot him?"

"I didn't git no chance, jedge. The fight was clean sp'iled, and the men gi'n it up. The Frenchman run for his rifle; but the Dutchman didn't wait to git no gun. He hit the bear right in the eye with his fist, fust one eye, and then t'other. Then he whipped out his knife, and stuck him, so that the bear won't never want to mix in with no Christian, civilized fight again."

"Did the men fight again?"

"That's the queer part on't. When the Frenchman saw how handsomely the Dutchman did the bear, he stuck out his hand, and they shook. I cal'late they hugged one another arter that."

"I like the Jairman vairy much when I see how beautifully, delightfully, lovely, he stick that bear," said Emile Pont, as he smiled sweetly at his late opponent.

"You don't fight mit me no more," laughed the German, as they shook hands again.

"Then, jedge, you ought to see that Dutchman git on his hoss. He went on jest as ef he was made of Ingy rubber. Jake, jest let the jedge see you git on that hoss once?"

Jacob complied, and no circus rider could have done it handsomer. With a light spring he placed himself in the saddle. Then, throwing his feet up into the air, he turned a back somerset, and landed on his taps, bolt upright, at the heels of the horse.

"Do you see that, jedge?" exclaimed the delighted old hunter.

Stepping back a few paces, he made a short run, and then vaulted into the saddle over the hip bones of the beast. Grasping the pommel of the saddle with both hands, he swayed his body backwards and forwards a few times, and turning another somerset, he came down on his feet under the horse's nose. The animal seemed to be accustomed to this sort of thing, and stood as quiet as a lamb.

Sile Carter doubled himself up, and laughed with delight at the performance of Jacob. The German had done what none of the rest of them could do, and he was a hero in the down-easter's estimation.

"Where did you learn all those tricks, Jacob?"

"I was a performer mit der circus in Germany when I vas a poy no pigger as a glass of beer," laughed Jacob. "I do dose dings mit der Indians.

I yumps over dere heads when they dinks dey caught me."

Sile insisted that both of the recruits should shoot. They did fairly well, but the veteran could shoot inside of them every time; and he enjoyed their amazement when they saw him put three bullets into the same hole at three hundred feet.

"All on us is good for sunthin, Jake, and we can't all eat with the same mouth: you eat with your'n and I eats with mine," said Sile, sagely. "I cal'late I can shoot an Injen, Jake, just about as quick as you can jump over his head."

"Here comes Jerry, and he comes alone," said Hal, when the show was over for the present.

"Tain't no use, jedge," said Jerry, as he rode his jaded nag up to the front of the house. "Folks has lost all their sperit, and none on 'em won't go off to shoot Injens. I believe they'd let the pesky redskins chaw 'em up and make 'em into sassages afore they'd tackle the varmints like men."

"You didn't find any one to join our party?"

"Not a human critter! They all want to set in their houses, and see things grow. The whole country's goin' to everlastin ruin for the want o' sperit in the people. If we ever have another Indian war the redskins will git the country back into their own hands, and use white men for scarecrows."

"Not quite so bad as that, Jerry."

"You mind what I say, jedge. I hain't got no great eddication, and I don't know nothin' about

trigomummery ; but when white men won't fight the Injens their morals is gone, and they ain't good for nothin' but to make slaves on."

None of us were much disturbed by Jerry's prophetic croaking, and we all ate a hearty supper.

CHAPTER III.

MY OWN INVENTION. — THE CARAVEL. — ITS THREE USES. —
A TRAVELLING FORTIFICATION. — A CASEMATE FOR A
DOZEN. — PREPARATIONS FOR LONG SIEGES. — A SKEPTI-
CAL LISTENER. — A DISGUSTED LOVER. — THE MEN FROM
SAN DIEGO. — ON THE TRAIL AGAIN. — ZEKE PUNCHEON'S
CABIN.

THE next morning we began our preparations in earnest for the enterprise in which we were to embark. I had had the intended trip in mind for months, and to some extent had made ready for it. Among other things, I had a wagon built after a plan of my own. The body was of iron, though it was lighter than one of equal strength made of wood would have been.

The iron plate was thick enough to resist an ordinary rifle ball, though it was by no means as thick as boiler iron. It was water tight, and had been constructed with the greatest care under my own supervision. The sides and ends were three feet high, and the latter were rounded. It was not a convenient wagon to get in and out of, but then it was not a pleasure vehicle.

It was made to receive hoops, so that it could be covered with a canvas top. A short ladder, which could be hooked upon the rail, was provided, so that the difficulty of getting in and out of it was reduced to a minimum. But our party were all to ride their own horses, and there would not be much occasion to get in and out.

I called my new-fangled vehicle a *caravel*, for it could hardly pass muster as a wagon. I might as well have called it a frigate, I grant, but the name I gave it suited me better. It was to be used for a threefold purpose. First, it was to do duty as a wagon, for it would take too many pack-horses to transport the large supply of provisions necessary for the twenty-five men in our party.

Second, it was to be used as a boat, in crossing rivers, or, if we came to navigable waters, it would serve as a barge for the conveyance of our heavier supplies. I had tried it in the water, and it was much more buoyant than a wooden craft of the same weight would have been. I had high hopes of the *caravel* as a nautical idea, and I expected it would justify the name I had given it.

Third, the *caravel* was to be useful to us as a fortification. I had fired no end of rifle-balls into the sides and ends, and Hal and Ned had chalked out a target upon the middle of the side ; but the bullets flattened upon it. The impact of the ball caused a certain degree of vibration, which tended to prevent a missile from going through the iron by causing it to rebound.

Not a ball passed through the sides of the caravel in all the tests to which it was subjected. If it was proof against rifle-balls, it would certainly resist arrows, javelins, and other Indian weapons. Jerry and Sile had laughed a great deal at my caravel, calling it an ark, and declaring that this was a better name for it than the one I used. They did not believe in carrying a fort along with them, and if a man could not cross the continent without a thing like that he had better stay at home.

As a novelty, the boys were pleased with it, though they had imbibed some of the contempt of the veterans at the idea of having an iron box to climb into in case of danger. But I was not disturbed by the jeers of the boys or the veterans. I had made up my mind after the stories I had heard, on good authority, in regard to the redskins, that we were to have a rougher time than we had ever seen before.

The caravel was mounted on wheels with broad felloes, and it was all ready for a start. My peons and vaqueros had hauled it alongside the house, where we could conveniently load it with provisions from the cellar. While I was looking it over, after breakfast, to be sure that it was in good condition, the boys joined me, and began to laugh at the "ark."

"Perhaps it will be my turn to laugh within a few weeks, boys. I hear every time that I hear anything that the Apaches are as mad as hornets about something, and all who come in their way lose their scalps."

"But the whole twenty-five you are to take with you can't get into your ark, judge," suggested Hal.

"I don't expect to get them all in to it. Jerry, Sile, and you say you won't hide your heads from the enemy in an iron box. That will leave only ten of us to occupy it. But it will hold fifteen men, and give them all room enough to shoot."

"Then the other ten have got to stand outside and take what comes," sneered Hal, who was not in the best-natured mood, for he was sure we should not be able to obtain the number of men I insisted upon having. "The dozen peons and vaqueros, the ones who are the readiest to hide their heads, will have to stand out on the open field."

"I don't expect to use the caravel for a fortification unless we are surrounded, or hemmed in by a large force we are not strong enough to hold out against in the open field. Do you see those bottom boards?"

Hal had ascended the ladder, and was looking into the interior of the body.

"I see them. What are they for—to make more load for the horses or mules?" asked Hal, with a sneer; and I am sorry to say that he was getting into a bad way as a critic, and thought he knew more about taking a train through the wilderness than any of the rest of us.

"They are for various purposes. They are to keep the provisions out of the water, if it rains into the body, though the plug-hole will dispose of most of it.

In the second place, they are to be used, like the wagon itself, for purposes of defence."

"Pine boards for defence against Apache Indians!" exclaimed Ned. "If I did not know to the contrary, I should suppose that you had never seen a squad of Apaches."

"Probably I have seen a hundred while you have seen one; and when you have seen one-tenth as many as I have you will know more about them."

"But what else are the boards for?" asked Ned, who was afraid that I did not mean to answer his companion.

"Hand me one of them, Hal."

Hal passed one of the boards, cut about four feet long, and I set it up against the caravel body, resting one end on the ground. It stood at an angle of twenty degrees from a perpendicular.

"With those boards arranged like that one all around the caravel, the men will shovel dirt and sods against them, on one or both sides of the vehicle, as occasion may require. Earth is the best substance to resist even a cannon ball, and you will see that a sort of casemate will be built under the caravel. In this place we will put the peons and vaqueros, and the non-fighting portion of the party."

"I think that will be first rate!" exclaimed Ned.

"If we have time enough, we can continue the earthwork, say, four feet beyond the vehicle at both ends. In the forward part we can have a place for a fire, if we have the chance to gather a supply of

wood, and at the rear end we can have an enclosure for the ladder, so that we can pass between the upper and the lower chamber of the fortification."

"Do you think the Apaches will let you fix things up as you say, judge?" asked Hal, whose ill-nature took the form of contempt of my invention.

"With ten of us on the inside of the caravel, and three on the outside, we can shoot them down until they conclude to move off to a safer place. Then we may have an opportunity to get out and bury you three, as well as to complete our defences."

"Humph!" sneered Hal.

"We should carry three gravestones for you if it were the fashion to use such ornaments in the Indian country."

"I don't think you had better say anything more, Hal," laughed Ned, who seemed to be greatly amused at the seriousness with which I talked to his companion.

"I think we had better go to the blacksmith's and have a suit of iron armor made for each member of the party," added Hal, who never gave up while he had anything to stand upon.

"It would be very heavy and uncomfortable in a hot day; and I don't believe the Apaches would be so obliging as to wait for you to put it on."

"I don't believe we shall need any armor or an iron caravel, for we are not going at all if we have to wait till we find six more men," snarled Hal. "I am

going off on a hunt; and if I am back in a week it will be soon enough to go with you."

"All right, but we shall leave as soon as we are ready."

Hal got his horse and rode off. He was an impulsive fellow, and when he took a notion into his head, he allowed it to run away with him. But at that time he had not far to go to find a hunting ground. We had bears, panthers, and other heavy game within a few miles of us.

"What makes Hal so cross this morning?" asked Ned, when the young lover had departed.

"He seems to be sure that we are not going to Chihuahua, or anywhere else. If he had not been in such ill-humor I should have told him by this time that we had engaged all the men we wanted."

"But isn't it time those men were here, judge?" asked Ned, as he looked at his watch with an anxious face, for he was quite as much interested in the proposed trip as Hal, though from a different motive.

"It is now after ten o'clock, and they ought to have been here long ago. I am afraid they have found too much civilization in San Diego."

"But you thought they were all honest and true men; and they promised to be here early this morning," added Ned.

"I think they are honest and true men; but probably they have money, and they may have got too tipsy to remember their engagement."

We waited all day long, and the six men did not put

in an appearance. Ned feared they would never come; but I was confident that as soon as they got over the lark I suspected they were having they would come. I had given the leader of the squad written directions so that he could find Buena Vista ranch.

Hal did not return that night. I tried to treat him like a young man, and not like a little child; but I was very anxious about him. We had had a long and hard winter in the mountains to the north of us, and some of the heavy game had come down near the ranches, starved out by the cold and the snow.

After dinner I concluded that we had better resume our old function as trail hunters, and try to find Hal. It had rained the morning before, while we were returning from San Diego, and we had no difficulty in following the track of his horse. We went a couple of miles towards the town, and then struck into the woods. A few miles on this trail brought us to Zeke Punccheon's cabin.

Hal had slept there the night before, for the weather was still too cool for the young lover to bivouac in the woods when he was out of practice.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SEARCH FOR THE ABSENTEE. — THE SIGNAL WHISTLE. — THE STRAY HORSE. — THE GROUND DISTURBED. — A SHOT IN THE DISTANCE. — A LUDICROUS SIGHT. — NED BROWN'S SHOT. — THE BENDING TREE. — PLEASANT SALUTATIONS. — HAL'S EXPLANATION. — BEAR MEAT FOR ZEKE PUNCHEON. — A RACKET IN THE TRAIL. — AN ARRIVAL.

THE information obtained at the cabin in regard to Hal relieved me in a measure, but we continued the search. Ned and I rode on about five miles farther, and I knew that there were no settlers in the direction we were going, still following the trail of the wayward boy.

"I declare, there is Hal's horse, browsing about the woods!" exclaimed Ned, as we came into a very wild and uneven region.

"That looks bad. But he may be all right."

Ned put his fingers into his mouth and whistled like a locomotive, giving the signal by which each of the boys knew the other. He repeated it several times, but there was no reply. We caught the horse and tied him to a tree. Taking his track, we followed it for a mile or more.

Ned whistled again, but we got no reply. The trail of the horse came to an end here. We saw where Hal had fastened him to a tree, and he appeared to have broken away. I was satisfied that there was some heavy game in the vicinity, for the marks on the ground indicated that Hal's horse had started on his return at full gallop; and we concluded that he had been frightened by a bear or a panther.

"But Hal was not on the horse when he started off at that gait," said Ned, when we had considered the situation fully. "I find his track leading into this wild place."

"Probably he heard a bear in the rocks, and dismounted to try his luck on foot."

Just then the crack of a rifle attracted our attention. The sound came but a short distance, and we hastened to follow it up. We both examined our guns, like prudent hunters, to assure ourselves that they were in condition for instant use.

We rushed up a steep rock which commanded a view of an open space. On the farther side of the clear spot we discovered Hal, and both of us were inclined to laugh at the rather ludicrous sight which was presented to us.

It was evident enough that Hal had not hit the bear, for his cinnamanship had driven the valiant hunter up a tree! We took it in at once, and without any explanation from the subject of the adventure. His shot had roused the bear, and made him mad. Hal had a double-barrelled piece, though he had

fired but once. The game had pursued him so closely that he had thrown away his gun, and attempted to climb a small fir-tree.

When we first saw Hal, the bear was within a few feet of him, and he was hardly out of the reach of his dangerous pursuer. Then he climbed a foot or so farther up the fir. He was just out of the reach of the bear's paws. He did not seem to be in immediate danger, as I judged at the first glance, and we paused a moment to consider the situation.

Hal plainly thought he was still too near his unfriendly assailant, and he was trying to ascend to a higher position on the little tree, which could not have been more than two inches in diameter. The small branches snapped off, as he hung his weight upon them, and he was obliged to hug the tree to avoid falling to the ground into the paws of his ugly besieger.

"Halloo! Help! Help!" shouted Hal; and his voice was so shaky that he could not have been heard if he had been any farther from us.

"That won't do! We must act quick, or it will be too late!"

"The bear can't reach him where he is," replied Ned.

"But don't you see that the little fir is bending over under Hal's weight?"

"I see," replied Ned, bringing his gun to his cheek.

Hal roared again in mortal terror; and I was con-



HAL HYDE'S NARROW ESCAPE. — Page 40.



fidant that he had heard Ned's signal. Probably his desire to get a shot at the bear had prevented him from answering it. But the little tree was fast losing what firmness it had in the beginning as the besieged hunter went higher. When I thought Hal was about to be carried to the earth by the failure of the tree, Ned fired.

"You hit him, but you have only made matters worse for Hal. The bear feels it, and it makes him madder than he was before. Give him the other barrel!"

Ned took very careful aim, and let fly again. The bear leaped into the air in the direction of the tree, and I thought he was making a flying spring at Hal; but he dropped on the ground, "laid out."

"That was a capital shot, Ned!" I exclaimed, not only because I felt relieved, but because I felt it to be a duty to encourage the boys when they did a good thing.

"He lies still," replied Ned, fearing that the brute might revive and make another attack upon his friend.

"That's the end of him. He won't climb that tree after Hal."

Hal did not come down from his perch in the little tree. He did not seem to deem it prudent to do so until he made sure that the bear was not in condition to embrace him.

Ned and I started for the spot as soon as he had loaded his gun again. Hal was no longer in danger,

and I was not at all anxious to quiet his fears, as I should have been if Ned had been the sufferer. It would do Hal good to realize his own weakness and insufficiency, after all the loud talk in which he had indulged.

We descended from the high rock from which we had witnessed the scene, and walked leisurely over to the fir-tree. Hal had fixed his gaze upon the bear, and appeared to take no notice of us. He evidently expected to see the brute come to life and climb the tree after him.

"You ought to have brought the caravel with you, Hal!" cried Ned, as we approached his perch.

"Is that you, Ned?" replied Hal, and his agitation had not abated enough to enable him to use his natural voice, and he spoke as though his heart was in his throat.

"Of course it is I. Why didn't you bring the caravel with you, and then you could have crawled into it instead of climbing that tree?"

"Is he dead?" asked Hal, glancing from Ned to the bear.

"I should say that he was. If he isn't we are in a worse position than you are; and the judge and I may want the caravel," laughed Ned.

I pried up the head of the bear with the butt of my gun, and was convinced that he would never drive another boy up a tree.

"He may be only stunned," suggested Hal, as he paused in his descent.

"Ned's ball went through his brain, and he won't climb any tree."

"Dead as a last year's herring," added Ned.

Hal straightened out his legs, which he had hauled in as a turtle does his head, and dropped to the ground. He was so weak that he could not stand up, and he sank down upon the body of the bear. Ned and I raised him, and he soon recovered his strength, when his fears were abated.

"Confound that bear! I was curled up so that it made me as stiff as a dead horse. But I'm all right now," said Hal, when he became himself again. "That was the ugliest cinnamon I ever met."

"You ought to have brought the caravel with you, Hal," laughed Ned, when he saw that his companion was all ready to "crawl out" of the scrape into which he had fallen.

"Scuttle the caravel! Did you see how it all happened?" asked Hal, looking rather sheepish, though he was clearly struggling with an explanation in his mind of the situation in which he had been discovered.

"We saw enough to understand the whole of it."

"We saw nearly the whole of it," added Ned.

"But we were in no hurry to interfere."

"I thought you were an age in getting here after I intimated that I should be glad to see you."

"You mean by that, when you shouted for help."

"We were looking at you before you invited us to come to your assistance," continued Ned.

Hal seemed to be embarrassed when he found that we had seen so much of the affair.

"You see I fired at the bear, and hit him," said Hal, trying to get his explanation in.

"That is just what I did, and hit him; but I didn't hit him in the right place," Ned chimed in.

"Instead of lying down, and dying, as a proper bear should when he is hit, he started after me, confound him! I didn't want to fire on him with my last barrel while he was on the run —"

"Of course not!" Ned laughed.

"I didn't want to throw away my last chance, and I ran for that high rock. I thought I should have a better chance over there. But, confound it, I struck my foot against a stone, and it threw me down, or part way down, and I dropped my gun. It was wholly an accident."

"Of course you wouldn't throw your gun away at such a time;" and I thought Ned was getting to be a little too rough on him.

"As soon as I could pick myself up, I found the bear was upon me. The brute was almost on the gun, so that I could not get it. All I could do then was to take to the tree."

"Why under the canopy didn't you take to a tree that was stout enough to hold you? The tree was bending over when I fired," added Ned.

"I hadn't time to go any farther," pleaded Hal, as his companion had pointed to a fir ten times as big as the one he had attempted to climb. "It is easy

enough to tell what you would do beforehand, or after it is all over."

"I don't think I shall allow you to go off in the woods hunting alone after this."

Hal looked at me, but he made no reply. We started back to the place where we had left our horses. Ned insisted that Hal should ride his nag till he came to the place where we had secured his own. After he was mounted on his own steed, he began to recover his self-possession, and it was not long before he was talking almost as loud as ever.

We stopped at Zeke Punccheon's cabin to tell him where he could find the bear, for we had got sick of bear meat, it had been so plentiful of late.

"What's all that racket?" asked Ned, as we came to the trail which led to San Diego, two miles from the ranch.

We heard the voices of several men who seemed to be in a very hilarious mood, for they were singing and yelling, making the country ring with their revelry. Presently they came into view, and I discovered that they were the men I had engaged in San Diego. Their present condition explained why they had not come before, for they were all well filled with whiskey. I had guessed right in regard to their non-appearance.

CHAPTER V.

THE SQUAD FROM SAN DIEGO. — A LESSON FOR HAL. — FORMAL INTRODUCTIONS. — THE TALL KENTUCKIAN. — THE OTHER KENTUCKIAN. — A FIRST-RATE RECOMMENDATION. — NO MORE WHISKEY. — A QUIET NIGHT. — PREPARATIONS FOR THE DEPARTURE. — SELECTING THE HORSES. — GIANT. — THE HORSE-TAMER. — MOUNTED AND OFF.

WHAT in the world are all these ruffians?" asked Hal, who had not yet learned about the expected arrival of the recruits. "I don't think we had better show ourselves to them."

"That's right, Hal; I am glad to see that you are getting to be a prudent boy."

"What are you doing with your gun, Hal?" asked Ned, when he saw that his companion was bringing his weapon into a position where it would be available for use.

"How do we know but these ruffians are highway-men or bandits? I want my gun where I can use it if there is any need," replied Hal.

"Don't bother with your gun. You will only provoke them if you are suspicious," added Ned.

"But a crowd of fellows like that killed a man not far from here a year ago," continued Hal. "I want

my gun where I can use it, and not where it was when that bear set upon me."

"We are all hyer, jedge!" yelled the leader of the party, who was at least six feet and a half high, though he was as lank as a greyhound.

"I see you are all here, though you are not exactly on time."

"That's true, jedge; and that slip is on my conscience," answered the leader, with an effort to look serious and solemn. "We took a drink all round, jedge, and our legs got so tangled up we couldn't leg it up to the ranch; and we had to wait to get 'em unsnarled. That's the hull on't."

"Your tongues have got a little snarled up as well as your legs."

"Mos' likely. I heerd the young squire call you a jedge; and I reckon he know'd what he was a talkin' about. Now, jedge, what be you a jedge of?"

"I am a jedge of men; and that is the reason I wanted you to go with me on the expedition we are to undertake."

"That's handsome; you be an upright and jest jedge. But be you a jedge of good whiskey?" asked the long leader.

"No, I am not!"

"Who is to jedge of the whiskey we tote with us on the trip?"

"We carry none, except in the medicine chest."

"Who are these fellows?" demanded Hal, amazed at the conversation to which he had listened.

"They are a part of our party for the trip," replied Ned, enjoying the astonishment of Hal. "We engaged them all in San Diego when we were there day before yesterday."

"Why didn't you tell me of it?"

"You were not very amiable, and the judge said you might find it out for yourself. I think we shall be off day after to-morrow. If these men had come when they promised, we should have been off this morning, and you might have been swallowed whole by that bear."

"If you had been a little more tractable, Hal, you would have known all about it. We will leave these men to finish their tramp, and we will ride on."

Hal bit his lips with vexation. He had been altogether too stiff and self-important, as well as rebellious in spirit against the plans of his elders. But he had quite enough to take him down that day. He realized that I had not given him my confidence as I had Ned, and it annoyed him. He had a great many good qualities, with some disagreeable traits of character. He was by no means a coward, though he was not so reliable in an emergency as Ned, who never bragged or blustered.

The tipsy party yelled at us as we rode on; but I would not allow the boys to make any reply to them, though they were disposed to do so. On our arrival at Buena Vista, it took some time to tell Sile and Jerry the story of Hal. The veterans were as much in the dark about the engagement of the hunters

as Hal had been. They had entertained Jacob and Emile, and all of them had been telling stories of adventure when the recruits arrived.

The veterans were not a little startled when the yells of the recruits reached them. The men filed into the door-yard in a rather disorderly manner, and Jerry Vance was disposed to be a little severe upon them. But I toned him down, and when I told him and Sile that they were to be of our party, both of them were ready to embrace the newcomers.

"I don't know the names of any of your party or I would introduce you to your companions on the trip."

I spoke to the leader of the party, for he had done all the talking for them from the beginning. His influence with them seemed to be unlimited, though they hardly said a word. There was a great change in this man since I had seen him before. Then he was one of the most solemn and reserved persons I ever saw; now he was rollicking and lively; but it was plain that the whiskey he had drunk was the cause of the change in his deportment.

"My name is Ben Cavendish, from Kentucky; half hoss and half alligator, and the rest snappin' turtle," replied Ben, giving me his great, hard hand, as he dropped the butt of the longest rifle I ever saw on the floor of the verandah—a luxury we had built on during the winter.

"I am glad to know you, Ben Cavendish; and I hope you won't get chewed up on the trip we are about to make."

"I ain't the sort o' cavendish that gits chawed up, jedge. I'm mighty apt to do the chawing myself when there's any to be done," answered Ben, opening his mouth from ear to ear, in appreciation of my joke and his retort. "I kin shoot with any man this side o' sundown, or t'other side either."

"Ben, this is Sile Carter, who puts three balls into the same hole at three hundred feet."

"Sile, yours truly. I'm glad to know any man that kin dew that," said Ben, grasping the hand of the veteran.

"I don't say I can do that; and I cal'late you can beat me," said Sile, magnanimously.

"You hain't drunk no whiskey to-day, Sile Carter; and that's the reason you don't brag. I have drunk six quarts of whiskey to-day, and that's what makes me brag. Jest as likely as not you can beat me shootin', Sile; but if you kin, you are the fust critter I've seen in Californy thet kin do it."

Ben certainly knew what was the matter with him. He pursed out his under lip, apparently to give dignity to his expression, and then walked up to the next man of his party and took him by the collar of his hunting shirt. The man thus handled was nearly as tall as Ben; and the Kentuckian dragged him up before me.

"Jedge, this is Buck Sykes; he is a Kentuckian, like yours truly, and a fifth cousin of one of the Presidents of the United States; and of half a dozen more on 'em, fors all I knows about it. He kin lick tew

tons of grizzlies, or ten tons of painters, and, next to me, he is the best man in this crowd. He can halve a rifle ball on your razor, and leave it fit to shave with the next minute; and ef he leaves more lead in one than in t'other, we'll turn him out o' the squad."

"He must be a valuable man to us."

"Val'able? I should say he would! Wuth his weight in gold mines. Val'able ain't no name for Buck Sykes. As to Injens, why he don't make no more account on' em than he does of flies and kittens."

"I am glad to know you, Buck." I shook his hand while Ben was dragging up another of his companions.

"Jedge, this is the most honery funny cuss that ever walked on tew broom-handles. His name is Linn Hoover; but he didn't come from old Kaintuck; that's all I got agin him — thet he didn't git a better place to be born in. But he kin eat, and drink whiskey, and shoot, and sleep sixteen hours in a day; he kin do everything but run; and he couldn't do that if nineteen grizzlies and tew catamounts was chasin' him."

Linn Hoover was duly welcomed. He was a young man, and as much given to laughing as Jacob Jäger. I took him for a wag that enjoyed his own jokes, whether anybody else did or not. The other three men were Leon Blanco, who appeared to be a Spaniard, Pierre Santon, another Canadian voyageur, and Rolf Brooks, from the state of New York.

All the men were introduced to one another; and

the greatest good feeling prevailed in all of them. My peons prepared a bountiful supper for them, and they ate as though they had been starved for a month. The whiskey the San Diego men had drunk was beginning to lose its effect, and in the evening they wanted more; but I succeeded in quieting them without it. I provided them with skins and blankets, and they camped on the floor. I heard nothing more of them till morning.

They turned out before sunrise; and their demeanor was completely changed. They were suffering from the effect of their whiskey debauch, and I permitted them to sleep most of the day. The caravel was loaded by our regular men. Hams and bacon were the principal part of the load, though we had a large supply of powder and lead.

In the afternoon all the horses were driven in by the vaqueros, and I called out the recruits to select their own steeds. We had some of the finest animals on the Pacific coast. Many of them were as wild and untamed as the mustangs of the valleys, and only perfect horsemen could do anything with them.

Ben Cavendish, who was now stern and reserved, selected the largest horse on the ranch; and he was at the same time, the wildest. Sile and Jerry were more afraid of these animals than of twice the number of grizzlies, and no attempt had been made to mount the Giant, as we called him.

"That is a very wild horse you have picked out, Ben," I suggested to him.

"All right," replied the Kentuckian, coldly.

"He may give you trouble; and we have not the time to break in colts, though that beast is six years old."

"I kin fix him," was all Ben would say.

The other men chose animals nearly as wild as Giant. When they had selected the horses they wanted they proceeded to catch them. We did not believe Ben could capture the one he had picked out. He went in among the herd, and I lost sight of him for a few minutes. All my hands had tried to catch Giant and had failed. If we got him into the corral, he would leap the highest fence we could build and would allow no man to come within twenty feet of him.

In a few minutes Ben came out of the herd leading Giant with a halter he had carried with him. The animal was full of mettle, but Ben walked along with him as dignified as though he had been attending a Kentucky court. He bridled him without any serious difficulty. He seemed to have come to an understanding with the brute.

The saddle was adjusted with a little assistance from Buck Sykes, and Ben leaped upon his back. Things were lively for a few minutes; and then Giant went off in a series of long bounds. Horse and rider disappeared, and I wondered if both would come in alive.

CHAPTER VI.

LINN HOOVER'S MISHAP. — THE CONQUEROR OF CROSSGRAIN.
— THE RETURN OF BEN AND GIANT. — JACOB'S TREATMENT
OF A VICIOUS HORSE. — ON THE VERANDAH. — SOME-
THING ABOUT EASTERN BOYS. — KENTUCKY BOYS. — BEN'S
OPINION OF THE CARAVEL. — BUCK SYKES'S YARN. —
NOVEL TREATMENT OF A GRIZZLY.

THE rest of the recruits had caught and mounted their steeds; but not all of them remained mounted more than a couple of minutes. Some of them were thrown a dozen times, but Linn Hoover was the only one who went back upon his first choice. He mounted the animal he had selected, and rode off at a lively gait.

We saw him gallop through a clump of trees we had saved for shade, and he was just coming out upon the open ground again, when his horse suddenly dropped his head, and planted himself against his forward feet. The next we saw of Linn he was flying through the air over the horse's head. He got there before the brute did.

It was sheer ugliness on the part of the animal, and Linn was pitched off with malice aforethought. He picked himself up, and there stood the horse behind

him. He did not offer to run away, and the rider took him by the rein, and led him back into the corral. Very likely the horseman saw more stars than are laid down in the celestial chart, or at least a different set of them. If he was damaged at all, he had grit enough not to mention the fact.

"I could ride that beast through a mirage, bottom up, first rate," said Linn Hoover, as he led the vicious steed up to the spot where I stood. "If I had him, I should use only his hide and tallow."

"You don't told me dot hoss won't blease you," interposed Jacob.

"I don't told you so, but that's what I said to the jedge," replied Linn, looking with contempt upon the German.

"I puts my eyes on dot hoss when I first comes in de blace, and I wants him; und I feel as dough I lose all your wife's relations ven I see you took him," added Jacob, cheerfully.

"Try him, Jacob, while the saddle and bridle are on him."

"Dot is der finest hoss as you have in der blace, joodge," added Jacob, as he took the rein from the hunter who had been thrown.

"I guess your head is thick enough to let him fling it against a rock, and it won't hurt you; but mine won't stand that sort of treatment. I carry my brains in my head; but some folks don't have any to carry," said Linn, mortified to see the horse he had rejected taken by another.

This particular animal was one of the best built for endurance in the herd, and his only failing was his vicious temper, which to most men would have been a fatal objection. Jacob sprang lightly into the saddle, and put his heels into the flanks of the ugly brute. The horse went off at as lively a pace as he had shown Linn; but he was hardly out of corral before we saw the German flying through the air. But he came down upon his feet, and leaped into the saddle again as though nothing had happened.

Again and again we saw him going through the air like a sky-rocket, but he always came down on his feet, though it sometimes required a somerset to correct his position. We left him to enjoy his recreation after this fashion, and continued to aid the rest of the men in making their selections. The last man had hardly been fitted out before Ben Cavendish rode into the corral.

Giant was in a reeking, foaming sweat, covered with froth and lather. The Kentuckian sat upon his back as though he was born there, and held his head up with a dignity which all the judges on the bench do not present. His steed seemed to be under perfect control, and to be thoroughly subdued. Ben did not say a word, and I could not even detect a smile of triumph on his hard face.

He dismounted, and seemed to be quite satisfied with the test to which he had subjected Giant; and I fancied that the animal was equally contented with the new relations into which he had entered with hu-

manity. I asked Ben how he liked the horse, and he said he would not give him for all the rest of the herd. He had wrought a miracle upon the fiery creature, and the problem of what I should do with him when I had been unable to do anything was settled.

It was sundown when Jacob came in. We saw him half a mile off, and Crossgrain, as we had always called him, moved along very quietly, though at a rapid rate. When he came into the corral, I saw that the sides, and even the haunches of the horse were covered with blood. Crossgrain had evidently been subjected to some sort of heroic treatment; but I did not object, for we had tried all manner of gentle dealing with him.

I asked Jacob how he got along with the beast, and he told me he liked him very much. As soon as he got the hang of the brute's mode of operations he had no difficulty in bringing him to terms. Just before he threw himself back against his forward feet, he had to gather up for the operation; and Jacob learned by the feeling what he was about. At this point, he pricked him sharply with his belt knife.

Having learned when to expect to be pitched over the steed's head, Jacob was able to avoid this part of the programme, though he gave the horse a part of his knife-blade every time he attempted it. Half an hour of this discipline was all Crossgrain wanted, and Jacob rode up to the ranch-house the victor in the contest.

The important matter of mounting the men was

settled; the provisions, stores and ammunition had been loaded upon the caravel; the boys had packed their saddle-bags; and every preparation had been completed. I did not expect to get away very early in the morning, and I was not anxious to do so. I had found that nothing was gained by hurrying in the start, and I did not wish to have to wait while some one came back for something that had been forgotten. I had made out a list of articles needed, and had been adding to it up to the present time.

When the day's work was done, the men smoked their pipes on the verandah, and talked about the journey before us. In bringing ten men together, eight of whom I had never seen before the present week, I feared that there would be some bickering and quarrelling among them; but so far an excellent spirit had prevailed. We had one Spaniard, two Frenchmen, and a German in the party; but they seemed to receive quite as much consideration as the native-born citizens.

"Be you gwine with us, my boy?" asked Ben Cavendish, as Ned Brown passed him on his way out of the house.

"Yes, sir; I am to be one of the party," replied Ned, with his cheerful smile.

"Be you the son of the jedge?"

"No, sir; he is no relation to me, but I am the son of a friend of his."

"Then, most likely you wan't born in the woods, and been fetched up on alligator milk," said Ben, who

had said more to the boy than to all others during the day.

"No, sir; I was brought up on cow's milk in one of the New England States," answered Ned, wondering why the Kentuckian was making so much of him.

"New England; I've hearn on't. I b'lieve all the boys out there wear white kid gloves," added Ben, solemnly.

"No, sir; I lived there till about a year ago, and I never had a pair on; and I never saw a boy of my age wear them," protested Ned, warmly.

"I've hearn that all the boys talk Latin and Greek when they are out to play, and wear spectacles."

"I don't know a word of Latin or Greek, though I wish I did, and never wore glasses. Do the boys in Kentucky feed on rattlesnakes, and sleep on the ridge-poles of the houses and barns?" asked Ned, soberly.

"Some on 'em does, but rattlesnakes isn't their stiddy rations. They chaws one up when they gits a chance, but I reckon they allus spits 'em out."

"Do your boys pick their teeth with a crowbar?"

"I reckon some o' the big uns does. But we uns in Kaintuck ain't so onery wild as you think for," said Ben.

"And New England boys are not so dainty and learned as you seem to think they are. They can all read and write, but they can shoot, ride horseback, and swim in the sea or a river."

"Call it squar, my boy. I see you kin do a thing or tew, and I reckon there's sunthin of you," added Ben.

"Thank you, Mr. Cavendish."

"Don't mister me, nor say 'sir' to me; I ain't a dancin' master, and I don't want nobody to mince things for me to eat, case my grinders kin do their own flourin'."

"All right, Ben. I suppose you haven't been in this wild country all your life?"

"Well, no, lad; I was born in old Kaintuck, but I've been out here more'n ten years, trappin', huntin', and fightin' Injens."

"Then, I dare say, you can spin some yarns, as the sailors say?"

"When did they say it? I've hearn backwoods men spin yarns that never seen a pint o' salt water in their lives. No; I don't spin no yarns. Buck Sykes spins all the yarns; and makes the wool out o' some on 'em."

"I dare say you have looked over the judge's caravel. What do you think of it, Ben?" asked Ned.

"I looked it over, and I hain't got nothin' to say agin it. A rifle-ball will kill me as quick as the next un, and I allus fights Injens behind a rock when I gits a rock to stand behind. Don't git shot when there ain't no need on't, my lad. The iron boat is a good thing, and the jedge has got a long head, and don't you forget it."

"I am not likely to forget it, Ben," laughed Ned.

I heard some of this conversation, and I was pleased with the endorsement of the Kentuckian; and I was glad to see that he was a prudent man. We had breakfast at six o'clock the next morning. The boys always sat next to me, one on each side. Ned had invited Ben Cavendish, for he seemed to have a great admiration for him, to sit next to him.

We had cold ham for breakfast, and I gave Ben a slice the full size of the leg. He took a tin box from his pocket, and proceeded to cover the meat with something in the shape of a reddish powder.

"What's that, Ben?"

"Nothin' but red pepper. I use it 'case I likes it, and 'case it likes me. I filled up this box in San Diego. It's a good thing allus to hev a box of red pepper with you?" replied Ben.

Whereat Buck Sykes began to chuckle and laugh. We all looked at him, but he only looked at Ben and laughed the more.

"Ben don't tell no yarns, and I hes to tell 'em for him. One day when we was down on the Platte River, Ben went out to walk," said Buck. "I reckon he walked further than he meant to, when he didn't hev no gun with him. A big grizzly made for him, and Ben went up a tree, and the b'ar scratched one of his boots off afore he got to his perch. That b'ar kept him there all night. He was lucky enough to have some cold venison in his bag, and he ate it, and

threwed the bones to the critter. He put red pepper on his meat. Then Ben got an idee. He went down to the lower limb of the tree, and held out a bone to the b'ar. The b'ar tuck it; and just then Ben emptied part of the pepper in the box in the b'ar's face. Ben says he didn't eat no more meat just then, but laid down on the ground; and it 'peared like he wanted to scratch his own eyes out; he didn't like red pepper in his eyes, no more'n Ben does. He was rip-roarin', stavin', snortin' mad, and didn't pay no more 'tention to Ben. That b'ar felt jest as though he owed a butcher's bill, and couldn't pay it.

"Ben didn't wait for him to pay it, nuther. He jest slipped down the tree to the ground. He wan't quite sure about the b'ar, and so he hove the rest of the red pepper in the box into the face of the b'ar, and lined it fur the camp. So you see red pepper's e'enamost as good as a rifle to fight a grizzly with. I don't know but it would do fur Injens jest as well as fur b'ars."

"And I didn't git no more red pepper for three months," added Ben.

"Is that yarn one of those for which Buck finds the wool himself?" asked Ned, in a low tone.

"No, my lad; that yarn's as true as preachin', and ef you don' believe it, I kin show you the tree over on the Platte," said Ben.

"As the tree must be all of a thousand miles from here, I think I won't see it to-day."

"But it's thar, jest as shore as you set hyer," protested Ben.

"I don't doubt it; and as an ounce of red pepper is not a heavy load, it will pay to carry it."

After breakfast we were ready to take to the saddle.

CHAPTER VII.

READY FOR A START. — THE MEMORY OF THE TROUBLESOME HORSES. — THE BUGLE CALL. — LIEUTENANT SILE CARTER. — MY LITTLE SPEECH. — THE CARAVEL IN MOTION. — ACROSS THE DESERT. — FORT YUMA. — A BROAD AND RAPID RIVER. — PREPARATIONS FOR CROSSING. — THE ADVANCE PARTY. — UNITED THEY SWIM. — AN UNEXPECTED ALARM.

AS soon as our morning meal was finished the men went for their horses. I had some curiosity in regard to the conduct of Giant and Crossgrain, and I wondered if they would remember the lessons of the day before. But I had not the time to go to the corral, which was a large enclosure we had fenced in, where the stock could be gathered together when necessary.

The vaqueros hitched on the horses that were to draw the caravel. There were twelve of them, though the vehicle could have been handled very easily by four on the prairie, or on an ordinary road ; but I wished to provide for emergencies, as well as to make it easy work for the animals.

The boys were already mounted, and their spirited steeds were dancing about the door-yard, almost as impatient as their masters. Hal wanted to know how

long it would be before we were in Chihuahua. Doubtless Juanita was in his mind, as she was in his heart, all the time, and he supposed that we were going to the residence of her father as fast as we could go. But I had not taken the pains to deceive him, even if I had been willing to do such a thing.

We went in search of the lost silver mines of Arizona, near the Apache's Pass. The boys were "The Young Silver Seekers," though Hal seemed to think he was going to visit the pretty daughter of Signor Don Ramon Ortiz. I told him it would be months before we reached Chihuahua, if we succeeded in getting there at all.

Hal looked very glum, indeed, at this answer. He had been as pleasant as a squash pie since his return from his hunting expedition, and I was afraid that he would get "riled" again, and make himself and his companion very uncomfortable. But he choked down whatever emotion he felt and behaved reasonably well.

"Here comes Ben Cavendish on Giant!" exclaimed Ned.

"How does the beast behave?"

"He moves and dances about as though he was proud of his rider," replied Ned. "Giant remembers all that he learned yesterday."

"If he is broken, he is worth any two other horses on the ranch. Ben is certainly a first-class horse-tamer if he has brought Giant into subjection."

Ben rode up to the caravel and reported that he

was ready for duty. He had hardly done so before Jacob came up with half a dozen others. Cross-grain had tried once to throw his rider that morning, but a single application of the discipline of the day before reduced him to submission. In a few minutes more all the party had gathered in the door-yard, near the caravel.

Our force consisted of eleven men and two boys (I did not care to make this division in the hearing of Hal), and twelve peons and vaqueros. The latter were all Mexicans, not the equals of the hunters I had engaged, but were very serviceable men. They were all provided with guns, and I had a dozen Sharpe's rifles and as many revolvers, which could be served out in case it should become expedient to do so.

There were only four peons, or domesticated Indians, who were to serve merely as laborers. They were not fighting Indians; at least we had never employed them in this way. We had thirty-five horses, for every man was mounted except the two men who were to act as drivers of the caravel team.

I mounted my horse, which was nearly as large as Giant, for I felt that a powerful animal was needed to carry a man weighing nearly two hundred pounds. At my request Ned Brown sounded a bugle call on a small horn I had provided for him. The entire party gathered around me, and I made a little speech to them.

I informed them that Sile Carter was my lieutenant

and second in command of the expedition. He must be respected and obeyed accordingly. I laid down my views of discipline. I had fitted out the party, should pay their wages, and the results of the enterprise, whatever they might be, belonged to me. If we found a gold mine it was mine and not theirs, though if they wanted to take a hand in working it they should be liberally dealt with. No one objected to this proposition, as I feared some might, and I was prepared to argue the question with them if they did.

Lieutenant Sile Carter was directed to lead the party, and he rode out of the door-yard, followed by the hunters. The caravel was to come after them, and the vaqueros were to bring up the rear. Hal and Ned were to act as my aids, and we were to take any position that suited our fancy.

I shook hands with Captain Wilkinson, an old friend of mine who was to take charge of Buena Vista ranch during my absence, and followed the caravel out of the premises. The two drivers rode on the horses, one being mounted on the nigh leader, and the other on the nigh wheel-horse. The vaqueros brought up the rear, as laid down in the order of march.

I was curious to know how the caravel would work when in motion, and I rode by its side. The broad wheels hardly made any impression upon the earth, and it rolled along as easily as though it had been a car on a railroad. It was heavily loaded, but the

dozen horses hardly straightened their backs in starting it, and were disposed to be as antic as the saddle-horses in the lightness of the work imposed upon them.

The first point to be reached was Fort Yuma, and I called the distance about a hundred and fifty miles. We had been over the route before, and there was no novelty in it to us. The first part of the journey was through a beautiful country; but in three days we struck the arid desert, and the travelling was very monotonous and wearying. In our former trip we had nearly perished for the want of water; and we could only carry enough in the caravel for the men, and the horses had to take their chances.

The recent rains, which were not likely to be repeated for months to come, had filled some streams usually dry, and we got along without any real suffering on the part of the animals. Our stock was in such excellent condition that we pushed forward again with great speed for such a party, and reached Fort Yuma in a little less than six days. Here we crossed the Colorado river.

The water was high at this season of the year, being thirteen feet deep, so that the sand-bars were covered. It was about four feet at low water, and it was hardly practicable to ford it on wheels at any season. The current was swift and the river wide. The caravel was to prove now whether it was good for anything or not. The only thing I feared was that the current would render it unmanageable.

We found an incline down to the water at some

distance from the fort, which is situated on a high bank. One-half of the bacon and other heavy articles were taken out of the caravel at the edge of the river, and we soon put the craft into the stream. I was rather appalled at the swiftness of the river from this point of view; but there was no such thing as retreating from the position.

The caravel was now on trial for its very existence, for I had no intention of dragging it a thousand miles or more if it did not answer the purposes for which it had been constructed. It sat on the water as though it had been built for a sea-going vessel. I found it would support all our bacon and lead, and they were restored to their place.

We had rope enough to reach across the river, but it was not an easy matter to get such a long line to the other side. Of course the men and the horses had to cross on their own hook, and I decided to make the hunters who were to go over first carry it with them. They were to keep hold of it as they swam their horses, and it would assist in keeping them together.

"I don't think these trappers and backwoodsmen know much about boats, Ned, and you shall go over with Sile Carter."

"All right, judge," replied the boy, glad to have a responsible position, "I don't see any difficulty at all in the undertaking if it is well managed."

"I am afraid it will not be well managed on the other side."

"The boat will be all right as long as the rope don't break ; and I am only afraid the current and the men will be too much for it."

"Look out for the men, and I will risk the current."

Ned was a little inclined to give us a lecture on physics, and I was obliged to cut him off. I arranged twelve of the men on the slant of the shore, and placed the rope in position to be run out. Each one took hold of it, and rode into the water. The horses were used to this sort of thing, and made no objection. Ned brought up the rear so that he could see the whole of the line ahead of him.

I had indicated the point Sile was to strike out for on the other side ; and of course it was considerably below the one where they started. In spite of the current Sile and his followers made a good showing, and the enterprise looked very hopeful. When the advance were about half way across, the vaquero I had left to watch the horses of the remaining party sounded an alarm.

I sent Hal to ascertain what the difficulty was. I knew there was no end of Indians on the river ; but I had not thought of such a thing as an attack so near a garrisoned fort. Besides the natives were not very warlike, though they would fight. I watched the progress of the riders in the water with more interest than I waited for the report of Hal.

Sile was making tolerable headway through the water, for the horses were strong and in excellent

condition. The rope enabled them to keep in about the same order as when they had started. It combined the united strength of the men and the horses, and no one could fall out.

"Indians!" yelled Hal, dashing down to the river on his horse.

CHAPTER VIII.

HAL'S RETURN.—A VERY MEAGRE REPORT.—TROUBLE ON TWO SIDES.—HAL AND HIS PARTY.—WATCHING THE SWIMMERS.—A DOUBLE ANXIETY.—ON THE TOP OF THE KNOLL.—CERTAIN SOUNDS.—A CONVENIENT TREE.—AN APPROACHING FOE.—SUGGESTIONS OF STRATEGY.—WHERE IS HAL'S PARTY?—A SUCCESSFUL PLAN.—ANOTHER ENEMY.—TWO SHOTS.

I WAS startled at the cry of Hal, as he reported upon his mission. I was vexed to be called away from the interesting duty in which I was engaged. But the loss of two dozen horses at this stage of the enterprise would have been fatal to the undertaking; and I feared nothing worse than this.

We had twenty-one horses on our side of the river, which had been picketed not far from the stream. All the draught-horses, which I had selected with great care, were among them, and I could not think of such a thing as letting the Indians stampede them.

"How many Indians are there in the party, Hal?" I asked, as the young man dashed down to the spot where I stood.

"I don't know; I didn't see them, and Pedro was no wiser than I was," replied Hal, who was considerably excited.

"Are they approaching the horses?"

"Pedro said there were Indians flying about near the horses, and he was sure they meant to steal them. I will go back and report if they come any nearer."

"Take Ben Cavendish and five of the hunters with you," I added.

I was not quite willing to lose sight of the caravel, as I must if I attempted to see what the Indians were about, and Hal was generally too rash to be trusted alone. But I thought the boy would do very well with Ben. I detailed the men, and Hal rode off leading the way for the men on foot.

I concluded that the savages were Yumas, and I thought they would run away as soon as they saw a few armed men. The horsemen were making but slow progress in the river, for they were now battling with the strongest current. They kept together, and I saw that the rope was a help rather than a hindrance to them.

I felt very anxious about the horses behind me, and no little solicitude in regard to the success of my river operations. If I lost the horses I should not care to send the caravel across. The worst that was likely to happen to the men was that some of them might be carried down the river farther than they intended; but this was not likely to happen as long as they clung to the rope, which I saw was a great help to some of the men.

My anxiety was so great in regard to the horses

and the men I had sent to the rear, that I walked up the bank where I could find a position that would enable me to see the operations of both parties. When I reached the highest ground near the stream, I could see the men in the river, but not the party with Hal. I walked to another knoll near the first, but still I could not see Hal's party. The horses had been left in a little valley, where the grass was very luxuriant, and they could get a good feed within the length of their halters.

It looked as though Hal had taken the men to the other side of the horse-camp, expecting to find the foe, if any, on that side of the valley. They were as likely to be on that side as the other. I was straining my eyes and ears to discover where my party were when I detected a slight noise in the brush near where I stood.

I dropped in behind a big tree near me, and listened again. In a few minutes I was satisfied that there was a movement nearer, though I could not tell whether it was made by our own men or the Indians. I ceased to look at the party struggling in the river against the current, for it seemed to me that I was nearer an adventure than those in the water or those I had just sent back.

In three minutes more I was certain that the Indians whose presence had been reported were ascending the knoll upon which I stood. I had my double-barrelled gun in my hand, for it was second nature with me to carry it if I did not go a rod from

the main body. But I could not have done a worse thing than to use it just then.

The tree was large enough to conceal my whole body from the approaching foe, but I dared not look out to see what the enemy were doing lest an arrow should penetrate my face. I could see nothing, hear nothing of Hal's party. I could only hope he had put his men in position to repel the Indians when they made a swoop down upon the horses.

The tree behind which I had taken refuge had a short, big trunk, from which the branches began to spread out at a point a little higher than my head. The butt of the tree was rotten and hollow, and I found a hole about on a level with my knees. Getting hold of a branch, I put one of my feet in the opening, and lifted myself up where I could see through the branches.

I had hardly secured this position before an Indian came to the summit of the mound alone. He crept up with the utmost caution, and took a careful survey of the valley where the horses were. He put his head to the ground and listened for some time; but his ears appeared to be no better than mine, and he heard nothing.

Then I saw him retreat to a place at the side of the knoll, and beckon to his companions. In a few minutes I saw about twenty men mounting the hill. I could see no more, but I was confident these were not all of the party. It was evident to me now that they intended to make the raid upon the horses from

this point. Doubtless they had displayed some strategy in the advance, and had shown themselves, if at all, on the other side of the valley. If Hal's party had shown themselves at all to the savages, it was probably in that quarter. While any pursuers were looking for them in that direction they would make the attack on the opposite side of the valley.

I was not particularly pleased with my position at that moment. I was bottled up where I was, and "my business was such that I could not leave." The savages would swoop down upon the horses, and would mount them and ride off. What could I do? This was the question I anxiously asked myself. The Indians had not seen me, and I was happy in having stolen a march upon them. The braves were coming up the hill in a stealthy manner; and if any one of them took a notion to walk over to my side of the summit he would see me. If I got up into the tree, they might find my tracks, and trace me to my hiding-place.

These horse-stealers had all gathered on the top of the hill, and were preparing to descend on the other side as soon as they could satisfy themselves that no white man was near.

My knowledge of these particular Indians was very slight; but after I had considered the situation for a long time, I concluded that I must do one of two things: I must allow the Indians to make an onslaught upon the horses, or I must expose myself to discovery, and death from an arrow, by some bold

stroke. The enemy had no firearms, and were not familiar with their use. I could bring down two of them; and that might be enough to scatter them.

But it seemed to me to be something like murder in cold blood to shoot down one of them wantonly. So far, the worst that could be said of them was that they intended to steal our horses. I was not even sure they would fight in order to obtain them.

If I fired and then ran, my retreat would be followed up by a flight of arrows. I did not want to be hit with an arrow; I preferred to be wounded with a knife or a bullet. It was not prudent to run, and I decided not to do so until the circumstances were changed. I decided to fire, hoping the thieves would take the alarm and beat a retreat. The rest of my programme was to be arranged on the spur of the moment.

I had cocked my gun when I saw the first savage. I raised it and fired. I was standing with my foot in the hole of the tree when I did so. My gun had a habit of speaking out loud when it spoke at all, and it made almost as much noise as a howitzer. I looked eagerly at the party of redskins to ascertain the effect of my experiment.

The Indians, who were all crawling on the ground when I fired, so as not to attract the attention of the owners of the horses they were after, all sprang to their feet as though they had been but one animal. They looked about them. The smoke of my powder was wafted by the wind towards them. If they had

been startled by the report of the gun, they were alarmed at the smoke. They fled before it as though it had been the embodied form of a pestilence with death on its wings.

They retreated in the direction in which they had come ; and as I was not in condition to meet them, I did not care to check the movement. I remained where I was, hoping Hal's party would hear the report of the gun and look in the right direction for the enemy. I watched the retiring squad until the last man had disappeared. I was still watching to make sure that they did not return, when I heard a rattling noise on the ground near my feet.

The sound was very distinct in the silence of the region. I heard it repeated before I took much notice of it, and when I looked down I discovered a rattlesnake about four feet long. He was an ugly looking villain, and I regarded him as worse to encounter than the squad of Indians which had just run away before a cloud of smoke. He was coiled up, ready to make a start for my leg. I had an idea that he had made one leap at me and had not aimed high enough. It did not take me long after I saw the reptile to leap up into a tree and haul my legs after me.

I concluded that this venomous snake had made his home in the hollow of the tree, and that he was not pleased to find me in possession when he came in after his search for food. I forgot all about the Indians, for the time, for they were the less dangerous of the two. As soon as I had taken myself out of the

reach of the villain, he began to cool off, but he did not indicate any intention either to clear out or to get into his nest inside the tree.

As the matter stood just then, I was treed — as effectually bottled up as I had been by the Indians. While I was kept a prisoner here, the Yumas might approach the horses in another direction and stampede them, for I could neither see nor hear anything of the party I had sent out. I looked at the snake again; and he seemed as powerful as an army.

"This won't do, Mr. *Crotalus*," I said to myself. "You are worse than a squad of Indians, but I can't wait your motions any longer."

I took careful aim at him and fired. My gun was loaded with a ball, and if I had been as good a shot as Sile Carter, I should have been sure of him. I fired at his head; and as soon as the smoke rolled away, I saw his snakeship wriggling about the ground at the foot of the tree. He was not dead; and both of my barrels were empty. It was not safe to go near that snake yet.

The surgeon connected with one of the United States exploring expeditions struck at, and, as he supposed, killed a smaller snake than this one. He wished to retain it as a specimen, and grasped it around the neck. But he took too long a hold, and the reptile doubled upon him and bit him in one of his fingers. By his own skill he cured himself, but he had a rough time in getting well.

I loaded both barrels and fired again.

CHAPTER IX.

RATTLESNAKES IN GENERAL. — ON THE TRAIL. — THE SINGLE RIDER. — HAL IN AN INDIGNANT MOOD. — IN COMMAND OF A PARTY. — A BAND OF DISOBEDIENT FOLLOWERS. — THE MOUNTED INDIAN IN THE WOODS. — THE DISGRUNTLED COMMANDER. — PEDRO AT THE HORSE-CAMP. — WHAT BECAME OF GREASER. — SEVERAL SHOTS.

IF the retreating band of Indians heard the report of the two shots I fired, doubtless they were an additional stimulus to their flight. I was not thinking of them just then. The wind blew the smoke away, and this time the bullet from my gun had mashed the head of the rattlesnake. He did not move again.

Where there is one snake there may be another. I looked carefully about the tree without seeing any more. For aught I knew, the hole in the tree might be filled with them; and it was possible that some of them had struck at the thick, long boots I wore. I loaded both barrels of my gun again, and after surveying the ground, I leaped down from my perch. It was expedient to give that hole a wide berth, and I kept as far from it as possible.

I saw no more snakes of any kind in that locality. I had no undue fear of venomous reptiles, though I

had always kept as far from them as possible. We used to speak of them with contempt, but I was always disposed to treat them with respect. The wonder to me is that in all my wanderings so far I had not known a single person to be fatally bitten by a rattlesnake, though of course I had heard of many such instances.

That rattlesnake made an impression upon my mind when I considered that I might have been bitten while I was watching the Indians. I could not help looking out for more of the reptiles as I walked down the hill, and ascended the other knoll. But I saw no more of them at that time, and I soon forgot all about the matter in more exciting scenes.

When I reached the top of the other hill, I took a careful survey of the region around me. I could not see or hear anything of the party I had sent out. I was prudent enough to keep a tree between me and the side on which the savages had retreated. I could not make out in what direction they had gone when they reached the foot of the hill.

But I did not conclude that they had given up the attempt to steal the horses. I knew that, when they found they were not pursued, they would make the approach in another direction. I did not care to meet them alone, for when they found they were not hurt by the gun, they might have less respect for it.

I descended the hill and came to the trail by which my party had reached the river, and by which Hal must have returned with the party I sent with him.

All was silent save the distant murmuring of the current of the great river, and the rustling in the wind of the leaves on the trees. I stopped and listened as I moved towards the valley where the horses had been left.

On the hill I caught a glimpse of the swimmers in the river. They had evidently passed out of the strongest current, and were approaching the shore on the other side. In a few minutes more they would effect a landing. But they could wait on the other side until we had disposed of the Indians. As I walked along the trail I paused frequently to listen. I had acquired some Indian-craft in my wanderings among the natives.

When I was about half-way between the caravel and the horse-camp, I heard the clatter of horse's feet ahead of me. I stepped aside into the brush, for I desired to see before I was seen. The sound was made by a single horse, and I wanted to know whether it was a wild Indian or one of my own party before I showed myself.

When the rider was within ten rods of me I saw that it was Hal. He had been sent out as the commander-in-chief of the party; or rather I had allowed him to believe that was his rank, without defining his powers and duties. He rode as though he was mad. As soon as I saw who it was I stepped out into the trail, and Hal began to rein in as soon as he discovered me.

"Are you running away from a fight, Hal?"

But I did not believe this was the case. The direction he came indicated that he had not been near the Indians. They could not have got around to this side of the valley in the time since I last saw them. As I had suspected from the first, Hal was as mad as though he had just come out of a hornet's nest.

"The fight was all among ourselves," replied Hal, in a growling tone, as though he regarded himself as a much-injured young man.

"Among yourselves!"

I was astonished at his answer; and I concluded that he had been "putting on airs," and that the hunters would not stand it.

"Yes, judge, among ourselves," added Hal, bitterly.

"What do you mean by that! Don't be all day in telling your story for there are Indians about here; and they want horses, as they always do when they can steal them."

"You sent me out in command of the party, and I tried to do the best I could," said Hal; and then stopped and looked at me as though he expected me to add something to what he had said.

I saw that he wished me to confirm his statement, that he was in command of the party; but I did not deem it necessary to do so. I had told him to go with half a dozen men and attend to the Indians; but I had not definitely given him the command of the little party; and I had not told Ben Cavendish to obey his orders.

"When we heard what Pedro had said about the Indians, and the direction in which he had heard them, I ordered the men to follow me. I started to go in the direction in which the noise had been heard ; but the men did not follow me."

"You ordered the men to follow, and they did not?"

I repeated what Hal said when he paused, evidently desiring me to sympathize with him, and condemn the rest of the party. I was non-committal on the subject.

"In other words, they would not obey my order," continued Hal, deeply wounded in his pride and dignity.

"Go on, Hal ; don't take the rest of the day to tell your story. If you do I can't wait to hear it."

"I rode back to them, and repeated my order. I told them to follow me. Instead of doing it, they walked away towards the two little hills," he continued, pointing to the two knolls I had ascended. "Then I told them I was in command of the party, and they must follow me ;" and Hal began to be as wrathful as doubtless he was when his command was not heeded.

At this point he paused again for my approval. I did not gratify him, for I did not like to countenance him in putting on airs to his elders. He might have commanded the party—of six besides himself—and had no trouble with them, if he had been tolerably modest about it, as Ned would have been in

the same position. The veterans of hundreds of Indian fights did not take kindly to his overbearing manner. If he had consulted with Ben Cavendish as to what it was best to do, the Kentuckian would have advised him first and obeyed him afterwards. We were not exactly under army discipline, and I did not care to govern my party in just that way.

"I told them to halt where they were," Hal proceeded. "They wouldn't even halt and hear what I had to say. They walked off in just the opposite direction from which Pedro had heard the Indians."

"I wonder I didn't see or hear from them," I replied, quietly. "I have just come from the two hills, and saw the Indians in that direction."

"Saw them over there!" exclaimed Hal, bothered, as he pointed in the direction of the hills.

"You did not go with them?"

"Of course I didn't go with them after they declined to obey orders. I told them over and over again that the Indians were in the other direction; but Ben Cavendish wanted to argue the matter with me. Of course I wasn't going to argue the question when I was in command of the party!" added Hal, holding up his head a peg higher. "I think I know how to command as well as to obey."

"Well, what did you do next?"

"The six men went off towards the two hills; and that is the last I have seen or heard of them. I rode off in the direction that Pedro said. I got my gun and my revolver all ready for service; for if the men

wouldn't stand by me, I was ready to fight the Indians alone."

"I suppose you didn't fight them?"

"I couldn't find them; at least I couldn't find but one; and he ran so fast I couldn't catch him or even get near enough to shoot him. He was on horseback, and the animal he rode looked just like Greaser."

Greaser was a horse I had formerly used a great deal myself, which was now ridden by one of the hunters. It was very likely that the rider Hal saw had been left on this side of the horse-camp to demonstrate at the proper time, and call the party sent by me in that direction, when they intended to stampede the animals the other side of the valley.

"I want you to straighten this matter out, judge," continued Hal, with damaged dignity. "When I am sent out in command of a party I want the men to stand by me. If you don't have the case understood, I shall not take charge of another party."

"Don't you do it, Hal!"

"I don't want even a silent snub; and I don't want to argue any question with my men when I give an order," added Hal.

"Now we will return to the horse-camp, and you must show me which way the men went."

"I don't want to go near the men again until things are set right," protested Hal. "When I give an order, I don't want to argue the question."

I resumed my walk towards the horse-camp, and Hal followed me.

"Do you think the horse the Indian was riding was Greaser, Hal."

"I think it was, judge," replied Hal, rather groutily, for the impulsive boy always insisted that I should redress his grievances immediately, and he was vexed that I did not give him even a crumb of comfort.

I found Pedro still at the horse-camp, looking out for the animals. I think he was a pure Spaniard, born in Mexico. He was a faithful fellow, and I don't think he would have run away while the horses were in sight if a thousand Indians had beset him before and behind. He had run to the nearest point to the river to give the alarm, but had returned to the camp at once.

"Greaser is gone, judge," said he, when I came up to him; and he seemed to be in great distress at the loss of the horse.

"What makes you think he has gone, Pedro?"

"There were only twenty horses when I came back from the river; I looked them over and found that Greaser was missing. He broke his rope, I found, and I suppose he went into the woods."

The Indian had doubtless caught him, and because he had a horse he was probably sent over to the farther side of the camp. I was not willing to lose the horse, and I was determined to reclaim him if it took a week. I mounted Wildcat, as my present steed was called. I started in the direction our men had taken; but I had gone but a short distance before I heard several shots.

CHAPTER X.

THE HUNTERS. — THE INDIANS IN AN OUTER CIRCLE. — BEN CAVENDISH'S CONTEMPT FOR THEM. — HOW IT WAS GOING TO BE. — THE KENTUCKIAN'S PLAN. — HAL STILL DISGRUNTLED. — THE QUAGMIRE AND THE FLAT. — A NEW POSITION. — A SIGHT OF THE ENEMY. — HAL'S STRICTURES. — A POINTED REBUKE. — A NOBLE HORSE AND A DIGNIFIED RIDER.

IN spite of what he had said, Hal decided to go with me, and he became quite excited when he heard the firing. Judging from the direction and distance of the shots, the hunters had not advanced far from the horse-camp. Undoubtedly Ben Cavendish understood the wiles of the savages better than Hal Hyde. I concluded from his firing that he had found the thieves.

The two hills I had ascended were on my left, and the camp on the right. Judging from the place where I had seen the Indians, I thought they had made a *détour*, and were intending to strike into the camp on the side between the hills and the wood, where Hal had seen the single horseman. Ben was in position to intercept them in whichever way they came upon their expected plunder.

After riding a few minutes more we discovered the hunters. They were moving rapidly to the north, or away from the two hills. I soon ascertained that the Indians were moving in the same direction, but at a greater distance from the horse-camp.

"Them Injens ain't no 'count," said Ben Cavenish, as Hal and I overtook his party, for by general consent he seemed to be the leader.

"Where are they now?"

"Jest on the other side of that clump of bushes. One man is enough to skeer off the hull crowd," added Ben. "You kin go and look after your caravel, jedge, and take the rest of the boys with you. I kin lick the whole o' thet pack."

"I have met them once before to-day, and they all ran away when I fired my gun."

"Thet's jest like 'em. They'll steal the hosses and run; thet's the wust on 'em. But an old woman could manage fifty on 'em."

"They have got one of our best horses, and I want him back again, if possible."

I informed Ben in what manner the Indian Hal had seen got possession of Greaser.

"I reckon we kin git him agin," replied Ben. "But I must have that critter o' mipe; and I reckon none on ye can ketch him for me. I'll go arter him. You needn't stop here, jedge, ef you want to see to your boat."

"I think I will see this thing through before I go back to the river."

"Well, jedge, I kin tell you jest about how it's gwine to be. Them Injens is makin' over to the north'ad: and the one on the critter is ridin' over this way. Ef you take the boys in through that low ground, you will hit him 'twixt the main body on 'em and the hoss camp. Jest keep 'em thar, and when you think you want to see me, I'll be thar," replied Ben, as he hastened off in the direction of the horse-camp.

I led the way indicated by the Kentuckian, Hal keeping at my side, and the four men following us. The low ground was a little valley between a couple of hills, perhaps a mile from those I had ascended. We could see no Indians.

"You didn't say anything to Ben Cavendish about obeying orders," said Hal, as we rode into the valley.

"I have nothing to say about it at present."

"Do you mean to let it pass without saying anything?" asked Hal, who did not seem to be able to get over the disobedience of the Kentuckian.

"We will consider that another time, Hal."

The boy bit his lip. Possibly he thought the loss of all the horses was a less calamity than the wounding of his dignity. I continued on the way without saying anything more about his grievance.

"What were you firing at, Buck?"

I put this question to the other Kentuckian, as he came up to the side of my horse.

"We hearn a noise, and we thought it mought be Injens; but I reckon 'twant nothin' more'n a cata-

mount, or some sich varmint," answered Buck. "I reckon we'd better hurry up, jedge, for I reckon I kin smell them Injens."

I could neither see nor smell them; but I thought it was about time for them to appear in this direction, for this appeared to me to be the side on which they would attempt to make the dash at the horse-camp, after they had been frightened off at the hills. Off beyond the valley was a considerable sheet of water, which was surrounded by a quagmire, for I had noticed it when we came through in the morning. The trail we had followed led to the southward of it. For about a quarter of a mile beyond the hills the ground was smooth and hard.

The rascal on Greaser must cross this level place to join his companions, or they must do so to join him. I was afraid they would get by before we could reach the spot to intercept them. I was confident that the Indian horseman had not yet joined his companions. The stolen horse was only to be recovered by keeping between him and the main body.

"The Indians can't be far from us, Buck."

"I reckon they ain't. We staid whar we were 'case we could step in between 'em and the hosses, let 'em come in any way they liked," replied Buck. "You driv 'em off them hills, and they will come this way, sartin shore."

"But they will get away from us, and strike in on the other side at the horses."

"That's so. We can't be in two places to onct,

judge. Ef we go over on that flat, the pesky snakes will creep in on this side. Ef we stay hyer, we can keep 'em from techin' the hosses."

"But we want to keep the one that stole the horse from joining his companions. Hal and I will ride out into the flat, and head them off in that direction."

"That's a good way to do it, jedge; that's Ben's way."

I did not care so much as Hal whose way it was if it only enabled us to effect the recapture of Greaser. I told Hal to follow me, and rode off towards the flat. It was sandy ground, with little growing upon it, so that we could see all about us, and unluckily we could be seen by the enemy from the hills and the woods.

I knew that these Indians were from the northward, and that they would retire in this direction when they had accomplished or failed in their mission. They had evidently come down for a fit-out of horses, and when they had obtained them, they would get out of the way with all possible haste. They were aware that this was the great trail for parties from the eastward, bound to Southern California; and no doubt they had stolen many horses from such travellers.

"Of course the Indians will not come out while we are here," said Hal, as I halted to take a more leisurely survey of the ground.

"I don't know that I want them to come out."

"What did we come out here for, then?"

"Certainly we did not come with the expectation

that the savages would come out here. All we desire to do just now is to prevent the mounted Indian from joining his companions, and to prevent the main body from retreating to the northward. Don't you see the plan of operations?"

"I don't think there is much plan about them," said Hal, rather sourly.

"Did you hear what Ben said when he went after his horse?"

"I didn't want to hear what he said," snapped Hal.

"All right, my boy; then hold your tongue."

"I thought you commanded the party; but it seems to be Ben Cavendish, after all; and I don't wonder he wasn't willing to obey orders."

"Hush, Hal! You are in bad humor, and you had better ride over to that lagoon and soak your head in cold water."

As I was looking about me I discovered a movement in the woods at the foot of the hills. I could plainly see the Indians I had met on the hill; and they did not seem to be very careful to conceal themselves. They were moving directly towards the horse-camp; and were likely to get inside of the squad we had just left. It was evident that they had seen the hunters, and were making a run to get between them and the camp.

They would not mind the loss of half a dozen of men if they could secure twenty horses. There was no longer any use in remaining on the flat, for we

could approach the camp, and still keep between the Indian horseman and the rest of the body.

"I suppose you saw the Indians then, Hal?"

"I didn't see any Indians," replied Hal, as he followed me towards the rest of our men.

"I don't think you will make a safe general in command, Hal. You think more of your private grievances than you do of discovering and beating off the enemy. I saw the Indians; and they are moving in towards the horse-camp."

"I don't believe I shall make a safe general if my men don't obey my orders."

"I think you have harped upon that string about long enough, Hal. I am sorry I did not leave you at the ranch, for you are hardly fit to take a hand in an enterprise of this sort."

"That's an odd way to put it," growled Hal. "You send me out in command of a party, and because the men won't obey their orders, you say I am not fit to take a hand in a difficult and dangerous enterprise."

"If Ben had obeyed your orders we should have lost all the horses before this time. You would have done better to argue the case with Ben Cavendish, for it is clear enough to me that he knew all about this business, and you know nothing at all about it."

"That's pretty severe, judge," added Hal.

"It is the truth that is severe. Can't you see as plainly as you can see your own face in a looking-glass that you would have gone over on the north

side of the camp, when the Indians were on the south side. While you were looking for them, they would have run the horses off. Ben knew the savages were not over there."

"The responsibility rested on me and not on him. If the horses had been lost that would have been my fault," added Hal, with dignity.

"How much consolation would that have been to me for the loss of over twenty horses? We should have had to go back to the ranch for more animals, and lost a couple of weeks of the best weather of the season."

"I don't see it in that light. There come Greaser and the Indian!"

I looked. It was Ben Cavendish, mounted on Giant. He was approaching us at full gallop. The Kentuckian looked as sober and serious as though he had been a judge on a bench. I never saw a finer horseman or a better rider. I could well believe he was a match for any score, at least, of Indians.

CHAPTER XI.

GETTING UP A BENEFIT. — THE REQUEST TO HAL. — A DIGNIFIED REPLY. — THE MESSAGE TO THE HUNTERS. — WHO IS COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF? — INTO THE WOODS. — FOLLOWING A LEADER. — THE INDIAN TRAIL. — GIANT AT LIBERTY. — INTO THE VALLEY. — THE KENTUCKIAN RECONNOITRES. — A DESPERATE RACE. — SHARP DISCIPLINE.

“ANYTHING new hyer, jedge?” asked Ben, as he dashed up to us.

“Yes; it is all new. The Indians have come out of their hiding-place, and they are getting inside of the rest of our party. They are making for the horses as fast as they can. I don’t think Buck Sykes has seen them yet, for he hasn’t moved since we left him.”

“That won’t do. They mought have seen the varmints, ef you seen ’em,” added Ben Cavendish, as he glanced in the direction of the valley through which we had passed. “They ought to hev seen ’em.”

“I did not expect you would get here yet awhile.”

“I seen that Injen on Greaser, and I was gittin’ up a benefit for him. But we must look out for the hosses;” and there was something like anxiety in



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the Kentuckian's features. "If they git a dozen hosses out of the camp, Buck Sykes and his fellers hasn't much of a chance at 'em on foot."

"We must ride in and set them in motion towards the horse-camp."

"There ain't the leastest need of all on us goin', jedge," added Ben, as he glanced at Hal. "Here, sonny, you ride over to Buck Sykes, as smart as you kin make your critter go, and tell him to h'ist hisself into the camp."

"I will obey when my superior officer orders me to do so!" replied Hal, throwing back his head, and looking as though he was in command of a company at a country muster.

"Bless his little stars! I reckon he's got the stomach-ache," said Ben, without deigning to cast a second glance at the young gentleman.

"Ride over as fast as you can, Hal, and deliver the message to Buck Sykes."

"Certainly, I will go, when you say so, judge;" and he started his steed in the direction of the valley.

He did not let the grass grow under his feet. He was a brave and generous boy, but he had his crotchets. I expected Ben to ask an explanation of the conduct of Hal; but he did not seem to notice the boy's dignity, and did not allude to the matter in any way then, or at any future time.

The Kentuckian said nothing on any subject; for he was not disposed to waste words at any time, except when he was intoxicated, and then he wasted

many that had better have been saved. Without indicating his intentions he rode off in the direction of the woods where I had seen the Indians. I could not think what he intended to do in this part of the field of operations, for all the action had been transferred to another part, nearer the horse-camp.

Hal made rapid time across the field, and I saw him join our men in the valley. I was afraid the hunters would follow the example of their leader and not heed him; for I ought to have cautioned Hal not to put on any airs when he delivered his message. If he provoked Buck, he might disregard what he said. But I was relieved of this fear before we reached the point for which we were riding by seeing the men move off in a hurry in the direction of the camp.

In a few minutes more we reached the wood, and Ben halted. He cast a glance across the flat, and then went ahead again. I began to feel that I was not the commander-in-chief of the expedition; for Ben did not even inform me in regard to what he was driving at, to say nothing of consulting me. But he appeared to know what he was about, and that reconciled me to his conduct. Besides, I knew that he was obedient in spirit, for he was at work at his best in my interest.

I followed him through the woods for half a mile, and then he halted at the foot of one of the hills at the side of the valley through which we had passed. Suddenly he dismounted, and fell to examining the

ground under his horse's feet. He seemed to be in doubt. Then he left Giant and walked up the hill.

I expected to see his wild horse, which no one else could even catch, to say nothing of managing him, take to his heels and leave his rider to foot it back to the camp. I rode up to the steed with the intention of taking him by the bridle, but he darted away from me, and would not permit me to come near him. Ben took a survey of the surroundings, and then returned.

"What do you make of it, Ben?" I asked more from curiosity than any lack of confidence.

"I seen their tracks. The Injens has been this way, and went outen hyer on their way to the hoss-camp. That's all right; Buck Sykes will take keer on 'em."

Ben walked up to Giant while he was talking to me, and the fiery beast never offered to stir until his master had mounted him. Then he was anxious to be off again, rearing and plunging, and capering about like a four-year old colt. If the Kentuckian was as good on Indians as he was on horses, it would be folly for me to presume to direct his movements.

My leader rode a short distance farther under cover of the woods, and then struck out into the country behind the hills. He was perfectly self-possessed, and did not seem to be anxious about what he was doing. I felt quite easy about the horses in the camp after the hunters went off in that direction. My experience assured me that the report of a gun

was quite enough to put the enemy to flight, though they had certainly shown a dogged persistence in their attempts to get at the horses.

After a short ride we entered the valley where I had parted with the men. Ben had slowed his steed down to a walk, and kept his eyes fixed on a point at the right of the hill. When I rode up to his side he motioned me back, and I took my place in his rear. Hal would not have stood it.

Presently Ben dismounted, and left his horse in the open field, as he had before. Giant was disposed to follow him, but he raised his long arm to him, and he stood immovable. The animal seemed to be extremely fond of him; and I came to the conclusion that it was a case of "love at first sight" between the steed and his rider.

Ben advanced very cautiously, still scanning the country as the slope of the hill permitted him to observe it. I sat upon my horse, not venturing to interfere with the operations of the Kentuckian. I did not even know what he was driving at, and certainly not how he was driving at it.

But I had not long to wait. Suddenly Ben rushed back to his steed. I had no idea he could move with such celerity. Without a word of explanation or any direction to me, he sprang into his saddle and dashed at a furious speed out of the valley and out upon the flat. I followed him. The instant I got out from behind the hill I understood it all.

Not forty rods ahead of Ben was the Indian thief,

mounted on Greaser. The rascal had kept out of sight until he concluded that the tall Kentuckian had returned to the horse-camp. He must have known what his companions were about, and probably he had been near enough to see as much of their movements as I had. He had kept inside the woods until he came nearly to the hills. The soft ground would not permit him to reach the horse-camp without going through the valley. As he approached the position we had taken Ben improved his opportunity.

No one knew better than myself what the horse that the Indian rode was, for he had been my own steed. There was a great deal of speed in him, and he was in excellent condition. The horse-thief saw Ben the moment he passed out into the open country. He whirled about and dashed off in the direction he had come, though he kept out of the woods. Ben let Giant out, and a livelier race than the one that followed I never saw.

The Yuma was no mean horseman, and he compelled Greaser to do his best. I followed with all the speed of Wildcat, but I could not keep up with Ben. I expected to see the Kentuckian halt at some convenient point, and level his long rifle at the fugitive; but he did nothing of the kind. I thought he was not wise to neglect his opportunity, for the Indian doubtless knew the country far better than his pursuer.

I was near enough to the hunter to see that he did not urge his steed, for Giant seemed to understand

the game and to know how to play his hand. I think I was ten times as much excited as Ben. I could not see how the chase was to end, and it could not be continued much longer, for the woods beyond the horse-camp would interfere with any free progress.

I thought there would be a big fight soon, for Ben was gaining rapidly on the fugitive. The Indian evidently had abundance of pluck, and doubtless he was a bold and skilful brave, or he would not have been sent out on the important mission he had tried to execute, and would have accomplished if Hal had had his own way. Ben did not seem even to have taken a pistol from his belt for the emergency that must soon come. The Indian was not going to surrender after the risk he had run.

The Kentuckian was beginning to lap over on the Indian. He sat as erect on his horse as when he had come into our presence earlier in the day. I watched him with the most intense interest as he gained upon the savage. I urged Wildcat to renewed speed. My beast was the equal of Greaser but not of Giant.

I saw the Yuma look over his shoulder at his pursuer frequently, and then jam his heels into his horse's flanks in the vain attempt to increase his speed. Giant's head was abreast of the fugitive's body, and the crisis was evidently at hand. Still there was no show of weapons on the part of the Kentuckian, and my wonder as to what he intended to do was greatly increased.

Giant seemed to understand at this moment that something extraordinary was expected of him as well as his master. He seemed to bend down more earnestly to his task, and the effect was instantly apparent. Ben was abreast of the Indian, who tried to sheer off, and get away from his assailant, as he now appeared to be; but the pursuer did not allow him to increase his distance at all.

I was but a short distance behind, and I saw that the horses could hardly have got closer together. Suddenly Ben raised his long arm and seized the Yuma by the throat. I had not time to observe what he was about, it was done so quickly. He dragged the Indian from his horse and dropped him on the ground.

The fellow fell directly in my path, and Wildcat made a flying leap over his body. I looked back as soon as I had regained my balance after the leap, and I saw the Yuma spring to his feet. He tried to run off, but he seemed to be injured so that he could not do anything more than limp.

I wondered that Ben did not stop, or at least abate his speed; but he kept on as though nothing had happened to interrupt the chase. I continued to follow him, for I understood that he regarded the horse as of more consequence than his late rider, as I certainly did myself, and I commended his good judgment.

He lost none of the ground he had gained, and I soon saw him take Greaser by the bridle.

CHAPTER XII.

BEN CAVENDISH REDEEMS HIS PROMISE. — GREASER AMONG HIS FRIENDS. — AN ALARMING POSSIBILITY. — SEVERAL SHOTS. — APPEARANCE OF THE ENEMY ON THE OPEN GROUND. — AN INDIFFERENT KENTUCKIAN. — SAFETY OF THE HORSES. — ALARM OF THE YUMAS. — HAL IN HOT PURSUIT. — BEN'S SIGNAL. — A DISGUSTED LEADER. — GENERAL BUSTER.

AS soon as I saw that Greaser had been captured by the Kentuckian, I reined in my steed. The exciting chase was over, and Ben had done all he had promised to do. He rode back to the place where I was waiting for him, leading the captured horse by the rein.

"Hyer is the hoss, jedge," said he, hardly looking at me as he spoke.

"I see you have him, and I am very glad to get him back."

"It don't do to let them Injens steal the hosses; it makes 'em think they kin do it when they like," added he, and he did not seem to be conscious that he had done a big thing.

"I suppose you saw the thief limping off into the woods."

"He ain't no 'count," replied Ben, without even deigning to look for the fugitive.

"I thought you would be likely to kill him before you got through with him."

"I don't kill flies; I only brush 'em off when they light on my nose. But I reckon we'd better see what the rest on 'em is doin'," added Ben, as he started his horse again. "I hope we hain't got to hunt no more on 'em, 'case I reckon you want to git over the river."

"I don't believe our men let them take any out of the camp; and that thief would not have got Greaser if the animal hadn't broke loose."

"You can't gener'ly allus tell. They mought and they mought not."

"You don't think there is any danger that the Indians have got any of the horses, do you?"

I was somewhat alarmed at the very thought, after I had taken so much pains to prevent such a catastrophe.

"I dunno; sunthin' mought happen, and it mought not. I don't expect nothin' has happened. If they've taken any of the hosses we'll have 'em agin."

The main body of the Indians were between us and the horse-camp; at least they had fallen in behind our men, and they moved in that direction. We rode along at a moderate pace, for Greaser did not lead well, and we were in no particular hurry. If the Indians could do any mischief it was done before this time.

We had gone but a few steps farther before we heard the report of several pieces. This indicated that the enemy had come upon our men, or our men had come upon them. We were approaching the bushy patch between the camp and the valley, and we could not see what was going on ahead of us. The first report of firearms was followed by occasional shots, and we concluded that our men were striking the enemy as they had a chance to do so.

Before I could ask Ben to give me his view of what was going on in the bushes, the whole band broke out into the open field. None of them were mounted, but they were running as if their lives depended upon their fleetness. As they came into view a couple of shots were fired from a point behind them.

"Halt hyer!" said Ben, with more energy than he usually put into his voice. He had come to a halt himself, and I did the same.

"Them bullets ain't for us, and we don't want none on 'em," added Ben. "'Tain't comfortable to be shot by your own friends."

"I don't think it is; but what you going to do, Ben?"

"I ain't gwine to do nothin.' There ain't nothin' to be done. They hain't got no hosses, and that shows that they didn't steal none."

But the next move was to be made by the Indians. As soon as they saw Ben and me they halted and looked about them. The party numbered about

thirty, and we could have killed some of them without the least difficulty. Ben proved that he had no special hatred for Indians when he permitted Greaser's captor to escape to the woods without taking any notice of him. "He didn't kill flies; he only brushed them off." This seemed to be the foundation of his principle in the treatment of the aborigines. He was not disposed to do anything in the nature of revenge, or to inflict punishment that could not work reforms.

The Indians looked at us in apparent amazement, and then glanced over their shoulders at the bushes behind them, from which the shots came. The line of their retreat lay through the valley from which we had just come, for the wet ground to the right of them seemed to be impassable. They wanted to pass us on their way to a place of safety. Suddenly they did the only thing they could do: they retreated to the border of the swamp, which was probably passable at a dryer season of the year.

Ben did not offer to fire a shot at them. He regarded them with contempt; and I never killed an Indian unless compelled by the peril of my own party to do so. I think we agreed perfectly on this matter. In this respect he was different from any hunters I had ever met on the plains or in the Pacific region. Generally they hated the savages, and lost no opportunity to sacrifice them, without much regard for the necessity of the case.

"What next, Ben?"

The Kentuckian seemed to be waiting, with his eyes fixed on the bushes from which the savages had come. Before he could answer my question, Hal dashed out of the concealment and gave chase to the retreating band. In a few minutes more the rest of the men came out on the run. Hal seemed to be shouting to them, though we could not hear what he said; but he appeared to be leading in the pursuit of the Indians.

"I reckon we hain't got no more business here, and we don't want the men chasin' arter them mud-eaters," said Ben, as he started his horse and rode towards the point by which they had left the brush.

"That's just my opinion. I think the men in the river have reached the other side by this time, and we needn't leave the horses at the camp any longer."

"Sonny is arter 'em; but 'tain't no kind o' use. There ain't no sport in shootin' Injens," added Ben, as he waved his broad-brimmed hat at the men.

They must have had one eye on him, for they immediately halted, taking no further notice of Hal, who was forty rods ahead of them, still dashing in the direction the band had taken.

In a short time we joined the men on foot. I told them to return to the horse-camp, mount, and go down to the river. Greaser was Buck Sykes' horse; I told him to take him and ride down to the river, and send the men up for their horses.

As soon as Hal saw that he was alone in the chase he gave it up, and rode to the spot where we were.

He wore his disgusted look, and I saw that he was dissatisfied again. Probably he was disgruntled because his followers had neglected to continue the pursuit with him.

"Can I return to the ranch, judge?" asked Hal, riding up to me, when I had sent the men off.

"Do you mean to return to Buena Vista?"

"That's what I mean," replied he, with considerable vim.

"Certainly, if you desire to do so."

"Can I go to Chihuahua alone, and by myself?"

"Certainly not."

"Then I will return to the ranch," replied he desperately, as though he intended to deprive me of the most valuable person in the party.

"All right. Do you start this afternoon?"

"I shall start at once."

"Very well. What shall I say to Senorita Juanita when I see her, if I should see her?"

"I shall send no message," he answered with dignity.

"As you please; but you had better go down to the caravel and get a supply of provisions before you start, for you know nothing can be had on the way, or at least the first half of the way."

"We have had no dinner yet, to-day, and I don't feel like starting till I have had something to eat."

"I think you are wise about that, Hal. You must take as much provision as you can carry, for it isn't pleasant to be hungry when you are on a long ride."

Hal bit his lips till they bled in vexation. I really believe the boy thought he was one of the most important personages in the expedition, and that I should not be willing to consider such a thing as his leaving. Very likely he expected me to make terms with him in order to induce him to remain with the party. Both boys were in my charge, and I stood *in loco parentis* to them. I tried to be a parent to them.

They had been allowed to come to the Pacific coast with me in order to build up their health. They had done this in the most effectual manner. In my judgment, Hal wanted building up in some other direction vastly more than he did physically. I did not mean to spoil the boy while he was in my care, and I paid but little attention to his whims, unless it was to mend his manners.

I rode off in the direction of the horse-camp, followed by Hal; but he said nothing more to me about going back to the ranch at this time. I decided not to give him anything more to do in the expedition until he applied for something himself, and thus informed me that he had decided not to return. I overtook the men on foot in a few minutes, and rode up to them. Hal hung back, and did not come near the hunters. He also gave the Kentuckian a wide berth.

"How happened you to fire on the Indians, Linn Hoover?"

"Buck Sykes hid in the bushes, in sight of the

hoss-camp ; and when the Injens was makin' a dive at the hosses, we opened on 'em ; but I don't reckon' we hit one on 'em. They did not callate on seeing us thar. General Buster led us —"

"Who led you?"

I had not before heard of the individual mentioned, and my curiosity was excited.

"General Buster," replied Linn, apparently in perfect good faith.

"I don't know General Buster ; I never heard of any such person before."

"I hope you'll excuse me, jedge ; I don't mean nothin' by it," added Linn, as though he had recovered his recollection all at once.

"I don't understand you yet."

"That's General Buster, over thar," he replied, pointing at Hal, in the rear. "That's what the men call him, and I didn't give him the name, nuther."

"Then Hal is General Buster?"

"I didn't think when I was talkin' as he was your son," pleaded Linn.

"He is not my son ; and is no relation to me."

"General Buster ordered us to follow him, and we chased the Indians, firing when we got a chance."

I thought General Buster was not a bad name for Hal.

CHAPTER XIII.

WAITING BY THE RIVER. — DINNER ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER. — A DECISION REQUIRED. — HAL WRESTLES WITH HIS PRIDE. — EXPLANATIONS AGAIN. — MESSAGES FOR THE RANCH. — HAL'S PROPOSITIONS. — ALL REJECTED. — A FINAL ANSWER. — A VOLLEY OF ARROWS. — PLUCKY HAL. — A GOOD SHOT. — THE FIRST HIT OF THE DAY.

WITH the rope used to picket the horses, we brought the spare animals into couples and arranged them for crossing the river. We marched down to the landing-place again, and my interest in the caravel revived. The end of the rope I had secured to the shore was drawn taut, and I was glad that the rope had proved to be long enough to reach across the stream.

The men on the other side had picketed their horses, and were lying on the ground waiting for the next move on our side of the stream. Probably they had obtained some hint of the adventures through which we had passed, and possibly they had seen the Indians on the knoll where I had first met them. A second examination of the scene revealed the fact that the men were eating their dinners. I made it a rule that every man in the party should

carry a supply of provision with him, that he might not suffer in case he was separated from the main body by any accident.

The sight reminded me that we had not dined on our side of the river, and I gave the order to the men to attend to this matter. Of course we did not set a table, but I directed the peons with us to bring out the boiled hams and the hard bread, upon which we made a hearty meal. We had a more elaborate meal than this sometimes, though not when time pressed.

"We are about to cross the river, Hal, and as you are not going with us, you had better take what provisions you desire from the stock before we get the caravel ready to go across."

Hal looked at me earnestly, and I realized that he wanted to back out. I was entirely willing that he should do so, but was not so ready to tease him to stay with the party as he wished me to do.

"I don't exactly like to leave you, judge, but I can't stand ——"

"If you do leave us we shall try our best to get along without you. We may not be able to do so; though I shall not interfere with your wish to return to the ranch on any selfish grounds."

"I was going to say that when I am in command of ——"

"You needn't say anything more about that matter, Hal. I give you my word I won't hear any explanations. If you desire to return to the ranch, and

remain with Captain Wilkinson, you may do so. You must decide the question yourself as to whether or not you will go."

"I wish to explain why I desire to return to the ranch," Hal insisted. "When I am ——"

"I do not wish to hear any explanation of the reason why you return."

"That is very strange, judge," added Hal, vexed and perplexed by the position I had taken. "You are a very fair man, judge, and it seems to be no more than just that you should understand my motives for the decided step I am about to take."

"I don't care a feather on the end of a hen's tail what your motives are. Some evidence is admissible and some is not. Your motives are not admissible. Settle the matter for yourself. If you are going, say so; and we will struggle along alone, or without your assistance."

I proceeded to give my directions for the crossing of the mounted men, and indicated the manner in which the draught-horses were to be conducted over. Those who were to engage in this undertaking started into the water, and did quite as well as those who had crossed before.

I waited patiently till they reached the other side, putting the caravel in condition for its voyage in the meantime. No one remained with me but Hal and the two drivers. My horse had gone over in charge of one of the vaqueros. I had found it was impossible to take the wheels off the chariot of the

desert without unloading it, and I concluded that it would float as well with them as without them.

The caravel was on the hard sandy incline that bordered the water, and I think I could have run it down into the water alone. Several of the hoops that supported the cover had been removed at the stern so that the steering oar could be worked. I expected the men on the other side to haul the odd craft through the water to the other shore. The only fear I had was that the rope might break when the current bore hard on the caravel. But it was a new rope, procured with special reference to what was now required of it.

I took my place at the steering oar, with two men at hand to help me as occasion might require. Hal was sitting on his horse watching the proceedings with interest; and possibly he was sorry he had decided to return to the ranch, especially as he was not permitted to put in his explanations.

"Good-bye, Hal," I called to him, when I saw the men leading the draught-horses up the bank on the other side. "We are about to go off into the water. I hope you will have a pleasant and a safe ride across the state, and that you will enjoy yourself with Captain Wilkinson through the summer and the fall, to say nothing of what is left of the spring."

Hal looked decidedly chopfallen. He glanced at me, but made no reply.

"Tell Captain Wilkinson, if he gets a good chance to sell any of the cattle, that I wish him

to do so, Hal. And give him my kindest regards, Hal."

"I don't know but I shall try it with the expedition a few days longer," said Hal, with a sickly smile.

"That won't do at all. In a few days we shall be well into the Indian country, and it will not be prudent to cross the region alone. If you have any thought of returning to the ranch you must start at once."

"I think I shall cross the river with you at any rate," added Hal; and it was very hard for him to back down without making a single point, or even getting in an explanation to soothe his wounded vanity.

"If you go at all, Hal, you must go now."

"If that tall Kentuckian ——"

"That's enough of that."

I was inexorable, and I knew I could not cure the boy of a bad habit unless he was compelled to back squarely down. He was not disposed to say anything more, though I saw that he had not now, if he had ever had, any intention of going back to the ranch. He relapsed into silence, and I waited for him to come to a conclusion.

"What are you going to do, Hal? I must have the question settled at once."

"Then I shall go with the party!" replied he, desperately. It was like pulling out a tooth for him to say so. I did not believe he would try to "bluff" me again.

I noticed that while I was talking with Hal, the party on the other side appeared to be very busy ; but whatever they were doing had been accomplished, for the men were at rest, and were waiting for a signal from me.

"Will you swim your horse over, or go over in the caravel, Hal?"

"I will swim my horse over," replied he, promptly.

I was sorry to hear him come to this conclusion. He was a bold, daring and plucky fellow when he was with a party, or even with a single companion ; but I was afraid the long swim would be too much for him. All that had crossed so far had been, as it were, tied together ; Hal was to be unsupported ; and I was not sure that I could render him any assistance if he needed it when the caravel was in the current of the great river.

"I think you had better go over in the ark, as you call it, and let your horse swim it."

"I am not a chicken," replied the young man, proudly.

"I know you are no chicken, Hal ; but you will be alone in the current while all who have crossed so far have supported each other. I may have trouble with the caravel, and I may want your help."

"If I can help you, I will do whatever you say, judge."

Before the matter had been settled, half a dozen Indian arrows came flying through the air. One of

them struck into the canvas cover of the caravel, and the other passed unpleasantly near my head.

"That is what you get for not punishing those Indians for stealing horses!" exclaimed Hal, as he dug his heels into the flanks of his steed, and galloped up the bank of the river.

"Stop, Hal! Where are you going? Do you mean to fight a squad of Indians alone?"

But he did not hear me, or he was too much excited to heed me. I grasped my double-barrelled gun and ran after him. I called the two hands with me, telling them to bring their guns. We could not see any Indians, but there was only one place where they could be concealed; and that was a clump of bushes near the slope to the river. They could reach this hiding-place without exposing themselves to our sight.

Hal was foolhardy, as he was apt to be; and I was afraid that he would be pierced with an arrow, possibly poisoned, before he could reach the bushes. He unslung his gun as he rode, and I knew he was good for two shots. When he had gone about half way to the clump of bushes, he reined in his steed. Raising his piece to his shoulder, he took aim and fired.

A general yell followed from the enemy. I saw one of the Indians jump up into the air, and come down upon the ground. The rest of them broke from their concealment and ran in the direction of the two knolls. Hal dashed after them. He had

done all that it was necessary to do, and I would have called him off if I could. I followed him with what speed I could. As the enemy were running up the side of the hill, he halted again, and this stop enabled me to reach him. He was raising his gun to give the Indians another shot when I asked him to desist.

In spite of the excitement under which he was acting, he regarded my request. I told him it was useless to chase them, and we had no time to spare. He had knocked one of them over, and that would satisfy the rest of them.

"I believe in teaching these villains to show proper respect to a white man," said Hal; but he checked himself when he realized that he was getting a little airy. "I will do just as you say, judge, for I believe in obeying orders."

"Then we will return to the caravel."

As we passed the hiding-place of the band, I saw the one who had been hit by the ball from the boy's gun. He was writhing in pain or terror, I couldn't tell which. As we approached, however, he took to his heels and ran up the bank of the river; but his movements indicated that he was badly wounded.

"That was a good shot, Hal; and you are the only one that has hit an Indian to-day, so far as I know. But we shall soon be out of their way. It is useless to waste time upon these rascals."

Hal was pleased with the compliment, and he followed me to the caravel.

CHAPTER XIV.

HAL IS HIMSELF AGAIN. — A LOST BONANZA. — THE CARAVEL SLIPS INTO THE WATER. — A MYSTERIOUS MOTOR. — THE ARK AFLOAT. — A USELESS PIECE OF MACHINERY. — AN ANGLING COURSE. — WHAT MOVED HER ? — THE STRUGGLING HORSE. — SWIMMING ON HIS OWN HOOK. — NEARING THE SHORE. — NED'S MANAGEMENT. — THREE CHEERS. — OUT OF THE WOODS.

THE little adventure on the shore had done a great deal to restore Hal's self-respect. I had given him credit for what he had done, and he felt better ; he was entirely tractable. My interest in the caravel had caused me to forget that there were Indians near the shore, when I sent all the men to the other side.

The enemy had doubtless discovered that only four persons remained on this side of the river, and the cargo of the caravel would have been a bonanza to them. But Hal had routed the whole of them with a single shot.

I gave Hal a line to lead his horse by, and he went on board of the caravel with me. I made the signal to the party on the other side of the river, expecting

it would take them some time to start the boat with such a length of line.

I had hardly made the signal before the caravel began to move slowly down the bank. I looked across the river, but I could not see that the men were hauling on the rope; on the contrary, I could see about all I had sent over standing on the bank. There were bushes on the shore so that I could not obtain a view of what was beyond them. I concluded that Ned Brown had been exercising his ingenuity in some manner, as he was in the habit of doing, for he had a mechanical turn.

The caravel rolled on its wheels slowly down to the edge of the water. I had loaded her well by the stern, so that she could not put her bow under water when she struck the stream. She touched the water, and it looked to me as though she was going to fill as it was. Hal and I and the two drivers went as far aft as we could. She continued to advance very slowly, though much more rapidly than I supposed it would be possible for the men on the other side to drag her.

My fears were not realized, and no water came into the caravel. I could not see how high the water rose in the forward end from the part where I stood, but it seemed to me that a few inches more would have made it a wet time in the bottom of the caravel. The bow began to rise, and a minute later the hind wheels ceased to touch the bottom. The odd vessel was fairly afloat, and so far it was a decided

success. We had tons of meat and stores on board, and it would have taken scores of pack-horses to transport them in the ordinary manner.

I got out the steering oar, but I soon found that it was little better than a useless piece of machinery. As soon as the current struck the caravel it began to swing down stream. I had expected this; but as long as the rope did not break no harm was done. I directed the vaqueros to work the oar, and try to keep the boat headed across the river, but I soon found that this was needless labor.

We seated ourselves in the after-part of the caravel, and watched its progress through the water. I observed that the craft heeled over on the up-river side, and I set the men to shifting the cargo until the boat sat on a level. I was perfectly satisfied with her, and I felt as other men do when they have invented something that is a success.

"She works first rate, judge," said Hal, when he had watched the motion of the caravel for a time.

"She is doing all I expected of her."

"But what is it that takes us along so smoothly? All the men are at the shore looking on, when I supposed they were to pull the caravel over," added Hal.

"I am sure I don't know how they are moving her, but they certainly are doing it very powerfully and very easily."

"They must have rigged a windlass of some sort."

"No, that is not possible, unless it is a movable windlass, and they have no vehicle on which to

transport it. Don't you observe that the power keeps coming from farther up the river?"

"I see that it does. I can see the rope several rods higher up the stream than it was when we started," replied Hal, rising and going forward to examine into the mystery of the force that propelled the caravel.

"I told Ned to look out for the moving of the boat across the river, and we agreed upon signals for stopping and starting again."

"I think the men on the other side must obey the orders of Ned, or he could not do anything," added Hal.

I made no reply, for it was plain enough what he was driving at. I had no doubt he would persevere in his attempt to get in an explanation of the events of the forenoon. But at this point in the passage I noticed that Hal's horse was having a hard time of it in the water. He was struggling with all his might, and the rope attached to his bit was drawn very taut.

"We are moving too fast for your horse, Hal. He can't swim as fast as the caravel is moving. Water is not the natural element of the horse."

"I was thinking just now that we were moving faster than at the first of it," replied Hal, as he went aft to attend to the horse.

"You are right, Hal; they have applied more force, and I think we must be making about three miles an hour, which is pretty fast for a clumsy craft of this sort."

"But what can I do for my horse? He is struggling to keep up, and we are dragging him by the bit," said Hal, anxiously, for he had as much regard for his horse as he had for Ned or me; perhaps more.

"There is only one thing you can do; and that is to let him loose. He will swim on his own hook."

"But won't he turn around and swim back to the shore we have just left?" asked Hal, doubtfully.

"I don't believe he will. He knows you, and he will be likely to follow you. We are about half way across the river, and it is no farther for him to go ahead than it is to go back. Let go of the cord, for he will lose his pluck if he is dragged through the water in that way."

Every horse was provided with a halter having a rope about twelve feet long, so that they could feed when picketed for the night or at dinner time. The cord was a hemp line, small but very strong. In swimming a horse from a boat this line was passed through the bit-ring, and both ends made fast to the boat, or held in the hand of the person leading the animal. Hal cast off one end of the line, and hauled in on the other. In this way the horse went free, with no line dragging in the water.

The steed neighed and snorted when he was free, as if to express his satisfaction at the change. He continued to follow the caravel, though he soon fell a considerable distance behind it. He swam easily now, for he had not the contending current in the wake of the boat to bother him. I advised Hal to

keep in the stern of the caravel where his steed could see him, and then he would be less likely to think of returning to the other side.

The caravel moved in a position about diagonal with the course across the river. I saw that we should strike the shore at the point where the men were watching the progress of the boat. We had passed beyond the strongest section of the current, and were now approaching the shore. The men were chatting and laughing, and seemed to be in excellent spirits. But I could not yet see the power that moved the caravel through the water.

"Our voyage is about up, Hal, and we are not likely to have to cross so large a river as this again."

"For my part I should not mind making a trip for a thousand miles down river in this craft. My horse has no notion of giving up and going to the other side, as I feared he might."

"If he had got turned around in the current so that he could have seen the other side he would probably have gone in that direction. But we are all right. The only thing that troubles me now is how we are to get the caravel out of the river. If we strike the beach angling it will be difficult to drag it out. I wish we had some way to set her square on the slope of the river's bank."

"Perhaps we can throw her stern around, for there isn't much current here," suggested Hal, as he run out the steering oar.

All four of us went to work with it, but could not

produce much impression upon it. Still we did something. I had my signal ready for the boat to be stopped, when I was somewhat startled by the report of a gun on the shore. I turned hastily to ascertain what had called forth this shot, when I saw that the caravel had stopped. The craft was still afloat, and I had not intended to give the signal until the wheels touched the bottom.

The bow of the caravel was within forty feet of the dry land, from which the water deepened rapidly. The boat had hardly stopped before Ned ran down to the water side, followed by all the men. As they halted they gave three rousing cheers expressive of the satisfaction they felt at the safe passage of the ark across the river. I thought they had better have reserved their demonstration until we had transformed the boat into a wagon on the dry land.

"We are all right, judge!" shouted Ned.

"Don't crow until you are out of the woods."

This seemed to me to be the most appropriate reply to the hail and the cheers. The boat had drifted down stream since she stopped, until I heard the off forward wheel strike the sand, or rather I felt it, and thought I heard it.

"Haul down on that line, if you please," said Ned, in a quiet tone.

All hands, including the rebellious Kentuckian, seized the rope with a will, and hauled it down over the bank. As soon as Ned found a knot where the rope had been joined, for it was in several pieces, he

untied it and sent a peon into the water to bring the end to me.

"Make it fast to the stern, if you please, judge," added Ned.

The other end of this piece was fast to the end of the pole, as it had been. At a certain point in this part of the rope Ned made fast the end which was attached to the power.

"Fire your gun, Linn," said Ned; and then I learned that the first shot had been a signal to suspend the action of the power.

The rope tautened, and it was plain that the power was operating again. This force seemed to be exerted at a point farther up the river than at any time before. The rope straightened, and the stern of the caravel moved up stream. When the craft was at right angles with the shore it began to move ahead, and the forward wheels took the ground together. The pole came out of the water, and the bow began to rise.

"Fire!" shouted Ned. "Bring down the horses, boys," he added to the vaqueros.

At my lead the four on board gave three cheers, for the job was really done. Ned leaped on board, and I grasped his hand and commended his skill and tact. It was the twelve-horse team at the end of the rope that had drawn us across the Colorado.

CHAPTER XV.

HIGH COMMENDATION OF NED. — HAL MAKES A REMARK. —
HITCHING ON. — OUT OF THE RIVER. — A LONELY WALK.
— THE SMOKE IN THE DISTANCE. — A MEETING DESIRED.
— A FLIGHT OF ARROWS. — A HOSTILE DEMONSTRATION.
— A FRIENDLY TREE. — A RULE OF THE CAMP. —
A LONG WAIT. — THE BEST TIME I EVER MADE. — THE
RETURN. — AN EXPEDITION PLANNED. — A START.

I WAS greatly pleased with Ned Brown's management of the machinery by which we had crossed the river, and I did not hesitate to express myself to this effect in the presence of the entire party. The boy blushed as he always did when anything was said in his praise, though commendation was as pleasant to him as to any other.

"The men obeyed his orders; that is the secret of the whole of it," added Hal.

I took no notice of this remark, though I intended at the proper time to explain to Hal why the men so readily obeyed Ned and disregarded his orders. The arrival of the horses in charge of the vaqueros changed the current of the conversation. The men proceeded to hitch on the horses.

The wheel-horses had to be backed into the water before they could be attached to the caravel; and I judged that the hind-wheels had not yet touched bottom. The whole twelve-horse team was hitched to the ark. Any ordinary team could not have drawn the heavy load up the steep bank; and it was for such emergencies as the present that I had doubled the number of horses.

The big team must pull the caravel out of the river, or something would break. I had no fear of the harness, for it had all been made under my own direction, and was twice as strong as was needed for ordinary purposes. At a signal from me the drivers started the team. The dozen horses had to lie down to it to start the ark, for the forward wheels had doubtless sunk down deep into the sand. But the caravel moved.

As it advanced up the steep bank the stern sank down, as the bow had on the other side. But the water did not come within six inches of the top of the iron, and none ran into the craft. We were certainly out of the woods now, figuratively, though we were about to enter them again on this side of the mighty river.

In a few minutes more we were on the level ground above. The men mounted their horses, and the march was resumed. At sundown we halted for the night. The weather was warm, and we hardly needed blankets, though we used them. In honor of our safe passage across the river, I directed the

cooks to provide a better supper than usual from our salt provisions, consisting of fried ham and a pudding, something like the plum-duff of the sailors. While it was in preparation, I took a stroll in the vicinity of the camp. I was inclined, after the day's journey, was over, to be alone awhile, and this luxury was not possible in the camp.

When I thought I had walked half a mile from the camp, I did not deem it prudent to wander any farther.

I was on the point of turning about when I saw smoke ahead of me. I concluded that it was a party of emigrants going west, as such were continually crossing this region. It might be the abode of some daring settler who was trying to make a home in this wild region, though a cabin of any kind was rarely found. A regular stage line had been established across this region, and it might be a station of the company, though they were generally placed in more defensible positions.

I was rather curious to know what the smoke proceeded from. If it was the camp of emigrants it was pleasant to pass the time of day with them, and useful to ascertain the condition of the country, so far as the Indians were concerned, through which we were to pass. I concluded to extend my walk a little farther.

I had gone but a few steps before three arrows fell near me, and I heard a noise in the bushes off to the left of me. I need hardly say that I was startled

by this hostile demonstration. The arrows had been discharged at me, and my life was in peril.

I had not intended to come so far when I started, and did not mean to go out of sight of the camp. I had left my gun in the caravel, where the boys and I slept; and this was a violation of my own rule, that no one should leave the vicinity of the camp unarmed.

I had a revolver in my belt; but such weapons are of little use except when brought into close quarters with the enemy. As it was, I could not even see my foe; I only knew that there were Indians near me. I concluded that it was a wandering band, and there were no means of telling to what tribe they belonged, or of knowing anything of their character. If they were Apaches, which was improbable in this section, my chances of escape were not one in a hundred.

I saw a large tree growing on a plain not far from me, and I backed along until I reached its friendly shelter. I got behind it, examined my revolver, and prepared to make the best fight I could against the foe if I was pursued.

But no Indians came in sight. I listened attentively until I was satisfied there was a large body of savages in the bushes. As yet they did not offer to pursue me, and I was rather perplexed to understand their intentions in regard to me. The sun had gone down, and it would soon be dark. The supper must be ready by this time, for I remained behind the tree all of half an hour. I was afraid if I came out from

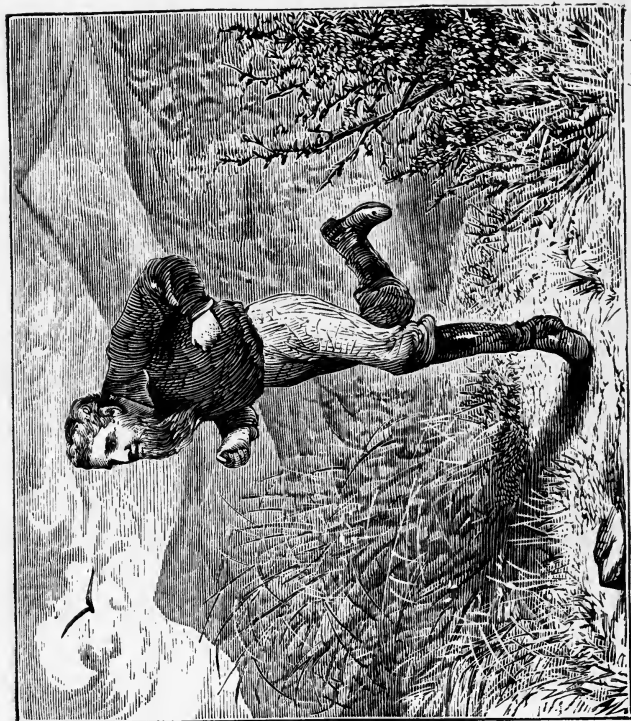
behind the tree a volley of arrows might contain an unlucky one that would make an end of me.

But I was getting to be impatient, though I knew that some Indians would remain in ambush all day and all night waiting for an expected victim. I had almost made up my mind to take my chances, and make my way back to the camp, when I saw a large body of savages filing across an open space. They appeared not to be aware of my presence, and were moving in the direction of the smoke I had seen. I watched them till they disappeared behind the bushes.

I considered what I had seen, and tried to put things together so that they would mean something. I came to the conclusion that the smoke was from a camp of emigrants, or travellers, and that these Indians were moving to make an attack. Perhaps the innocent people in the camp, possibly women and children along with them, would be murdered in cold blood for the plunder of their stock and stores.

In my present situation I was helpless, and could not assist or even warn them. I was practically a prisoner myself. But the peril of my unknown neighbors fired my blood with indignation, and I was determined to do something. It was probable that the region was patrolled by Indians on the watch, and it was possible that the eye of some concealed savage had been upon me during the whole time I had fancied myself concealed behind the tree.

I could stand the suspense no longer. I had not



THE BEST TIME I EVER MADE," — Page 133.

A collection of 25 small, stylized line drawings of various insects, including beetles, flies, and bees, arranged in a grid-like pattern.

much respect for the marksmanship of these Indians, and I determined to run the risk of being pinned down with an arrow. I faced in the direction of our camp, and then broke into the smartest run I could get up, though I am too heavy to be a fleet runner. I am sure that on this occasion I made the best time I had ever made in my life. I expected every moment that an arrow would bring me up and that I should be called upon to part with my scalp. The thought was not pleasant, and I continued to run long after all my wind seemed to be gone.

I reached the camp. No one had even missed me, and I concluded not to say anything about having wandered away without my gun. I don't understand to this day how those arrows happened to be discharged at me, for it was contrary to all the principles of Indian strategy. They must have been fired by some indiscreet young braves in violation of orders, or the savages must have mistaken my intentions. I had turned around at about the time the arrows came, and they may have supposed I was going to the camp of their intended victims. They may have fancied that I saw them, judging by my movements when I began to retrace my steps.

It was too early for an attack upon the camp of the emigrants, if that was what was intended, for the Indians would not be likely to break into the camp till its occupants were asleep. It would be time enough to assist and warn the camp an hour or two hence, for it could not be more than a mile distant.

The supper was all ready, and I allowed the men to eat it before I said anything of what was required of them. It was not a drinking feast, and the meal would be finished in half an hour at the most.

The party had not been worked hard, and had been well fed; consequently they were in excellent spirits. When I had finished my supper I proceeded to lay out my plans for the protection of the travellers, whatever they were. I considered whether we should go mounted or on foot. The Indians had no horses when I saw them, but they might supply themselves from the stock of their victims.

I decided that we must go mounted, for we might have to pursue the Indians if they made a successful raid in order to recover the stolen stock or plunder. While the men were still gathered in messes at the meal I read off the names of a dozen of them who were to compose the party. I mentioned Ben Cavendish first, and I intended that he should take the command. Then I explained the duty in which they were to engage.

"You didn't read my name, judge," said Ned Brown, rushing up to me as I put the paper on which I had noted down the names into my pocket.

"Ben Cavendish is to command this party, Ned."

"I don't expect to command this or any other party, but I want to go and see the fun," replied Ned.

"Ben is not a great Indian killer."

"I don't care about killing any Indians, I don't consider it good sport."

"Get your horse, then, and bring up mine while you are about it."

I could not refuse anything to Ned after the achievements of the day, though I always felt better when the boys were safe in camp.

The boy rushed to the horse-camp, where those detailed for service had gone before, and soon returned riding his own and leading my horse. Ben had already reported himself ready, and I was explaining to him the position of the camp of the travellers.

"I reckon them Indians seen you?" said he, interrogatively.

"Of course they did, and fired three arrows at me."

"Kin you tell me so that I might fix it where this camp is, jedge?"

"It lies exactly east of us, as nearly as I can make it out from the course I had to walk. I went to the northeast and then to the southeast in order to avoid a rugged hill. When I got the arrows the Indians were about northwest of the camp."

"That's all I want, jedge. I kin find that camp with my eyes shet now. When you tell things by the pints of the compass I allus knows whar I am. We needn't wait no longer. Is General Buster goin'? Ef he is I reckon 'tain't no use for me to go. He kin chaw up all the Indians this side of the Mississippi, jest as he would a piece of fat bacon," said Ben, smiling; and I am sure he had not the slightest ill-feeling towards the boy.

"Hal Hyde is not going this time."

I was not inclined to talk with him about the discipline the boy needed. I hoped to be able to cure Hal of his besetting fault; but I did not wish to lessen his self-respect — only his vanity.

We rode away from the camp, Ned taking his place at my side, for he wanted to know something about the nature of the expedition.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEN CAVENDISH'S VIEW OF THE SITUATION. — SPECULATIONS AS TO THE TRIBES. — NOT APACHES. — A ROARING, THUNDERING NOISE. — BEN'S FIGURING. — FORMING THE LINE. — OUR INSTRUCTIONS. — THE INDIAN ON THE WHITE HORSE. — BEN'S SHOT. — THE MADDENED HERD. — THE INDIANS IN THE REAR. — A BREAK. — STRANGERS. — A SLEEPY WATCH.

IT was a bad night for an Indian raid; for the moon was shining brightly, and it was almost as light as in the daytime. Yet the "poor Indian" had to steal his horses and plunder the camps when they came in his way, whether the moon shone or not. But then the watch was likely to be less vigilant on such a night.

Ben had decided that the Indians would approach the camp from the westward, for the reason that the campists, having come in from that direction, would apprehend less danger from that quarter. When I heard them they were probably getting into position for the night's work. Ben thought it likely that the travellers had a considerable number of horses at their camp or the Indians would not be making such extensive preparations, and would not have waited until night to bag a few of them.

"I don't reckon them Indians is Apaches," said Ben, as we rode along.

"This is not their country."

"Their country is almost anywhar between the Colorado and the Rio Grande," added Ben, who had travelled through this region before and was familiar with the country.

"Why do you think they are not Apaches?"

"Apaches wouldn't wait till night; they'd gone in afore this time. They are wonderful smart critters, them Apaches is," added Ben; but I found that his estimate of their prowess was not quite so high as that of Jerry Benson, who thought that white men were hardly a match for them.

"I reckon these hyer must be Yumas, the same critters we bounced on t'other side of the river. If they'd been Apaches they wouldn't let you off without taking your scalp," added Ben.

"We have seen Apaches and know something about them," said Ned. "Suppose we find any silver in the place where we are going to look for it, do you think the Indians will let you stay there?"

"I don't intend to ask them; but if we find a mine we shall know where to look for it when we want it. I have no idea of going to work upon it on this trip."

"What's that?" exclaimed Ned, suddenly.

"I don't see anything."

"I don't see anything, but I hear something," added Ned.

I got the sound a minute later. It was a sort of

distant thundering, with an attending roar. But it was at a considerable distance from us, and in the direction in which I had seen the smoke of the camp. It was possible that the Indians had attacked the party of travellers; but we could not hear the report of guns, and the white men would be likely to use their weapons.

"I reckon I didn't figger it out right, jedge," said Ben Cavendish, reining in his steed. "The pesky critters have gone to work on this side, and they're rushin' down this trail."

"What is that noise we hear?"

"The Injens is runnin' off the stock," replied Ben, calmly. "I reckon we shall hev to shoot some o' the critters."

I knew how the Apaches raided the horses of parties, and it was probable the Yumas, if these were of that tribe, did the business in humble imitation of their more powerful and desperate neighbors. The roaring sound came nearer to us, and it began to be distinguished by particular sounds. I could hear the Indians yell like so many demons.

Ben formed his men in a line across the trail in which the marauders were approaching. He placed himself in the middle, and Ned and myself on the extreme right of the line, perhaps because he thought this would be the safest place. The Kentuckian then proceeded to instruct his men as to what was to be done.

He told us the horses would be frightened out of

their wits by the yelling of the Indians in the rear of them. He instructed our party to fall in with the horses, and retreat with them. Then, when he had silenced the Indians, the vaqueros of the party were to get in ahead of the frightened animals, catch as many of them as they could, and head off the others.

The unearthly din came nearer and nearer to us; and we soon got a view, in the moonlight, of the herd of horses the thieves were driving before them. On a white horse at the head of them rode a naked Indian. He was yelling and gesticulating, probably to the band behind him.

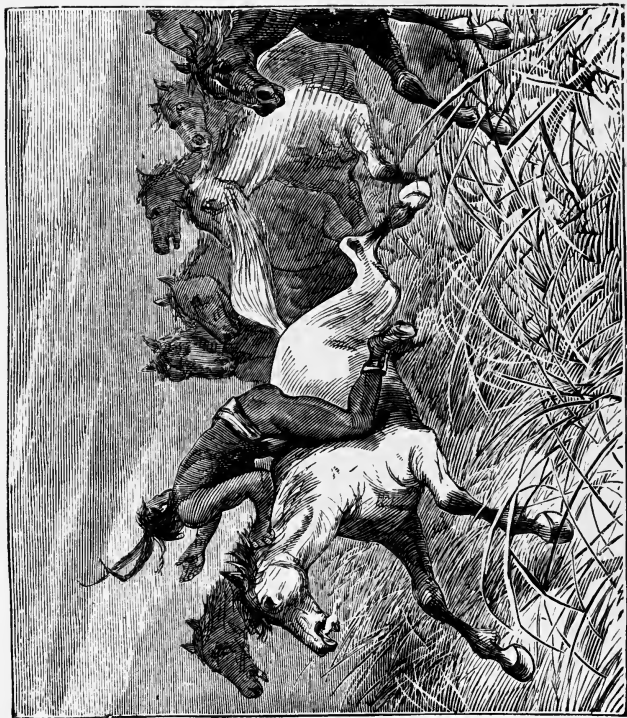
There appeared to be about twenty horses, though I had no chance to count them. The white horse was evidently a leader in the herd, and wherever he went the others would follow. They were running at the top of their speed, and of course there was no such thing as checking their mad flight.

As they approached, Ben Cavendish raised his gun to his shoulder. As soon as it came to the level of his eye he fired. He did not fuss about his aim, nor waste a single instant of time.

"There goes the Indian," exclaimed Ned, as the savage on the white horse dropped off, and went under the feet of the fleeing herd.

"He don't know what hurt him."

In accordance with the orders, the men dropped into the herd of horses, and put their steeds to the height of their speed. Their animals were fresh, and they were better horses, so that the vaqueros had no



THE STAMPEDE. — Page 140.

difficulty in getting to the front of the retreating column.

The country was open in just this place, though there was every variety of scenery to be seen around us. We started our horses with the others, and moved in the same direction, but we were to keep on the flank of the herd. Ben and Jerry soon worked over to the side where we were. The Kentuckian as he rode along at a breakneck speed kept his eye on the rear of the herd part of the time.

"Halt!" shouted he, suddenly.

At the same instant he raised his rifle and fired a second time. I heard a yell in the rear, and I had no doubt he had knocked over another Indian. The shot was followed by a hideous yell, and it sounded to me like a knell of disappointment.

The savages must have heard the first report of Ben's rifle, and seen the body of the man that had been shot off the white horse. This second shot seemed to be enough for them. The Kentuckian loaded his rifle quicker than I had ever seen it done before. Ned and I took aim at individuals in the savage band.

"Hold on, judge," quietly interposed Ben. "Tain't no use to waste shot and lead on them critters."

Before I could cover my man with the muzzle of my gun, the whole band, not less than fifty in number, broke and fled from the trail into the bushes to the north of them.

"You won't see no more o' them critters to-night,"

said Ben. "Them is Yumas, and they don't want no more on't."

"Is the fight over, Ben?" asked Ned, evidently disappointed at the insignificance of the brush we had had.

"The fight's all over for this time, sonny. But the work isn't, and I reckon we had better be ketchin' them hosses."

Ben started his steed in the direction of the herd. The animals had abated their speed when the yelling of their pursuers ceased. We found the vaqueros had obeyed their orders to the letter, and secured about one-half of the herd, holding them by the long halters they carried. When they came to a stand, the herd were not inclined to desert their companions that were under restraint, and we easily secured the rest of them.

"There is somebody coming in the rear," said Ned, whose ears were the best in the party.

"Stiddy, there, all on ye!" called the commander of the party. "Don't speak, and don't make no noise."

"What's coming now, Ben?"

"I reckon the owners o' them hosses is comin' arter their stock," replied Ben. "I don't know who nor what they be; but if you make a rumpus hyer they will pitch in and fire on us."

"We can sound a bugle call, and that will tell them that we are not Indians."

"That's an idee, jedge. Blow the horn."

Ned carried his brass horn slung by a worsted cord over his shoulder, and I instructed him to blow the call, which was all he could blow at this stage of his learning.

The notes sounded clear in the still air of the evening; and presently we heard a shrill whistle as a return signal. Three men soon appeared, armed with guns.

"Have you seen any horses come over this way?" asked one of them.

"About twenty on 'em," replied Ben, quietly.

"All our horses got away a while ago," added the speaker. "We have come out to look for them. What were you yelling so like all-possessed for?"

"We don't yell. Heve you a notion that your hosses walked off theirselves, stranger?" asked the Kentuckian.

"As they were gone, we supposed they did."

"I reckon you ain't much used to travellin' in the Injen country, stranger?" added Ben, with something like pity in his tones.

"We have come across from Texas, and we haven't seen any Indians yet; that is, only what we see by the side of the road and in the settlements," replied the traveller.

"Then you heve been uncommon lucky. I reckon you ain't seen none to-night; but we heve, about fifty on 'em; and they was stampedin' your hosses. You wouldn't seen nothin' more on 'em ef the jedge hadn't happened to git an idee of what was goin' on."

"You don't say so! Is it possible, Indians?" exclaimed the speaker for the three strangers. "Well, I heard a great noise, but I thought the horses made it all. But who is the judge?"

"That is what they call me sometimes." I rode up to the party.

"I am glad to know you, judge. I had no suspicion that we had been raided by Indians. We have not had a particle of trouble before. We have twenty horses, and we are taking them on for the stations of the overland stages. I hope we shall not lose them."

"I don't think you will. Did you see anything of a dead Indian or two, a short distance back?"

"I saw nothing, but we heard a while ago what we now know to be the crack of a rifle."

"Where were you when you first heard the noise?"

"We were just rolling ourselves up in our blankets to go to sleep; for we move off as soon as it is light in the morning," replied the speaker. But I came to the conclusion that they had got farther than rolling themselves up in the blankets, and had gone to sleep. Certainly no men with their eyes and ears open could have failed to know what was going on at their horse-camp.

The men followed us, and we soon came to the vaqueros, who had by this time secured all the horses. I told the leader that two of the Indians were shot, and they were not inclined to return to their camp. They spent the night with us.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE STAGE COMPANY'S PARTY.—IN MOTION AGAIN.—THE RIO GILA.—THE HALF-CIVILIZED INDIANS.—THEIR ARTS AND IMPROVEMENTS.—THE SILVER MINE REGION.—THE WANDERING APACHES.—THE TWO TRAILS.—A RUGGED COUNTRY.—DON RAMON CRTIZ.—TROUBLES IN MEXICO.—THE WANT OF A LETTER.—A DANGEROUS REGION.—THE SENTINEL'S SIGNAL.—APPROACHING WAGONS.—FRIENDS.—A STRANGE LOAD.

IT was strange to me that the stage company's party had not encountered any hostile Indians in their long march from Texas, when we had met two bands that day. But we might not see another Indian for a week or two. The three men were well armed, but they were thoroughly alarmed when they ascertained what a narrow escape they had made, and how near they had come to losing all their horses.

I sent several men with them to bring up their baggage. Early in the morning they left us, and expressed their gratitude in warm terms for the service we had rendered them. We left the camp as soon as we had taken our breakfast.

► We followed the valley of the Rio Gila, and passed through fertile regions and sandy, stony plains by

turns. We went for ten days without any incident worthy of record. We passed through many villages of Papago and Pimo Indians, and those of our party who had never visited this region before were greatly interested in observing the fruits of the semi-civilization of these tribes.

All that we saw was an old story to me and the boys, though I was interested in the irrigation of these people, at a different season from what I had seen it before. We did not go out of our way to see the relics of the former people who had dwelt in this region, though we saw what came in our way.

We enjoyed the grand scenery which sometimes came into view, and made light of the difficulties of the way when the territory was singularly uninviting. We cultivated the acquaintance of the Pimos, who are generally friendly to the whites. They are peaceable, though they are the most formidable enemies of the Apaches, and seem to have the ability to contend successfully against them, as no other tribes have. Their arts are peculiar and their skill and bravery make the people interesting.

But we were approaching the region where we were to search for the silver mines, old or new, as the case might be. This was not properly the country assigned to the Apaches, though many of the eight tribes composing this savage people either dwell in or visit it for purposes of plunder and destruction.

There were two trails across this part of Arizona,

one by which we had come from the Colorado, and the other by the way of Tucson, on and near which the Southern Pacific railroad has since been built. Most of the events of our silver-seeking expedition occurred in the vicinity of the point we had now reached, where our search began in earnest.

A considerable portion of the country was a perfect earthly paradise, though there were mountain gorges, and deep chasms in the earth that were absolutely appalling to the visitor. I had sojourned for a few days in an Apache village not a great distance from our present locality, though I had come to it from another direction, and I had but a very indefinite idea of its exact position.

We passed the mouth of the Salinas river on the tenth day from the camp near Fort Yuma. The character of the country began to change and to become more rugged and uneven. Still we found beautiful flats on which our horses had the sweetest of feed. I could have floated the caravel most of the way in the river, at the present high stage of the water; but it would hardly have paid to drag it with the horses against the current.

When I met Don Ramon Ortiz the year before we had talked a great deal about the silver mines of this region. His daughter had been captured by the Indians, and Hal had played a part in restoring her to her father. Don Ramon desired very much to visit the region where we were at the present time; but Mexico was shaken by the revolution against the

occupancy of the French, who had placed Maximilian on the throne as emperor.

He could not leave his daughter at home, and he had written me that she would come with him, in spite of the Indians, if he concluded to visit the locality indicated. I had waited in vain to receive another letter from him, inquiring for one every time I went or sent to San Diego. But the mail service in Northern Mexico, as well as through the wild regions of Arizona, was very uncertain. The Indians captured whatever came in their way, and doubtless they had destroyed the contents of many a pouch.

As I did not hear from Don Ramon, I concluded that he did not intend to visit the locality of the silver mines, and that the troubles in his own country would not permit him to leave home. Hal had waited for the coming of the letter with even more interest than I did; and early in the season he had counted upon a visit from Juanita at Buena Vista. His only hope now was in going to Chihuahua, which was to have been done after the visit to the silver locality. It might yet be done.

But I had long since given up all hope of seeing Don Ramon. He was familiar with silver mining, and I was not, though I had learned something about it from him. If we found a silver mine, especially the one about which we had talked so much, I thought it probable that I should carry the news of the discovery to Chihuahua myself. According to Don Ramon, who had been a student of history in

relation to this subject, there was a silver mine of extraordinary richness in this locality, which had been abandoned by the Spaniards after some of their reverses in earlier days. I had considered the matter so much myself that I had become a sort of enthusiast. If I had not been, I should not have undertaken this expedition at the present time, when all the reports concurred in representing the Indians as in a very uneasy state of mind, to use the mildest terms.

The Rio Gila had lost its placid character, for we had entered the mountain region. Around us were lofty and ragged peaks, and there were numerous canons, on a small scale at first, as we advanced. We had not yet reached the locality where we were to make the long halt to search for the abandoned mine, or where we could seek, with much chance of success, for a new one.

Moreover this was regarded as a dangerous region, on account of the rugged character of the country, which affords favorable fields for the operations of the wandering or the local Apaches. In fact, it was involved in so much peril that most of the emigrant trains took the new trail, passing through Tucson, where the railroad is now located.

We began to find no little difficulty in getting the caravel over the ground, for the heavy rains had made many wash-outs on the banks of the river, and the rocks were at all times rather serious impediments. With less horses than I had furnished for it I should have been compelled to abandon it, or give

up the object of our search. It was still doubtful whether we should be able to get it through the mountains.

We encamped for the night, near the river, shortly after we entered the mountain region. Sile Carter had posted guards at the most exposed points, so that our camp should not be attacked, or our stock stampeded, without seasonable notice. Only trained Indian fighters were employed in this service, but Ned, Hal and myself took our turns with the others.

We had eaten our suppers and were thinking of turning in, as the sailors say, for keeping a regular watch nights had made us all willing to sleep when we got the chance, when the report of a gun at the most easterly point of the camp startled us all. We sprang to our feet and seized our guns and revolvers, which were always placed within reach when we slept. Ned Brown was on duty at the place from which the report came, and I was quite anxious about him. A band of Apaches would make short work of him, if any of them crawled on the ground within reach of him without being seen.

Sile Carter, who had charge of this part of our daily routine, detailed six men to hasten to the exposed point. I ran with Ben Cavendish in the direction indicated. We heard nothing more in the shape of an alarm; but Ned was cool-headed, and did not make a signal for nothing. As we advanced, we discovered the boy at his post, and I was relieved of my fears.

"What is the matter, Ned?" I inquired, as I came to his position.

"There is something approaching the camp from up the river," replied Ned. "I obeyed the order to give notice of any unusual sound; and if you listen you will hear a noise that indicates the approach of teams. I have heard the rumble of wagon-wheels for the last fifteen minutes."

We all listened, and distinctly heard the sounds described by the sentinel. The wagons were still at a considerable distance, and were moving very slowly.

"There is nothing to fear," said Ned; and he advised us to return to our blankets.

"Not yet, sonny," replied Ben. "It mought be that a gang of Apaches heve captured them wagins, and are fetchin 'em this way. We don't stretch out till we know for sartin who's alonger them wagins."

Before the wagons came in sight two men marched within hail of the sentinel. Ned brought his gun to his shoulder.

"Who goes there?" demanded Ned.

"Friends," replied the strangers.

"Advance, friends, and explain who you are," added the guard.

"We are a party moving west. We have lost most of our horses, and are looking for a good place to camp for the night," the stranger explained.

"Pass, friends," added Ned, satisfied that the party were not Apaches, or dangerous persons of any kind.

The train consisted of two wagons and six men.

Only two horses were attached to each wagon, and though they were descending a slope, they appeared at times to be all the animals could manage. We walked back to our camp with the strangers, who seemed to be very intelligent men.

"How did you lose your horses?"

"We had four to each wagon, and four that we rode, for the other two men are teamsters. Night before last, though we kept a man on watch all night, we were stampeded by Apaches, and eight of our animals were lost," replied Major Galloupe, who was the principal man of the party.

"Are you sure they were Apaches?"

"I have no doubt of it, for I had seen them the day before. We fired upon them, and killed one of them, and I know he was an Apache. We made a hard fight, and saved four of the horses by killing that Indian; for his companions lost time in trying to pick up the one we knocked over."

"Where are you bound?"

"We are going to start a ranch in Southern California."

"Your wagons seem to be heavily loaded."

"Each of them contains a bronze howitzer, which, with the carriage and the ammunition, weighs about fifteen hundred."

It was a strange load for such a party.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AMAZING FOLLY. — MAJOR GALLOUPE. — AN OLD ARTILLERY-MAN. — A GOOD-NATURED MAN. — GUNS AND AMMUNITION. — INTO THE RIVER. — A SHAMEFUL WASTE OF PROPERTY. — AN OFFER. — THE DELIGHTED OWNER. — A GOOD TRADE. — PREPARING FOR THE JOURNEY. — A NIGHT ALARM. — ON THE MARCH AGAIN. — A BEAUTIFUL VALLEY. — THE ENEMY IN SIGHT.

WHAT under the sun induced you to haul a ton and a half of cannon and ammunition across the continent?"

I was absolutely amazed at what seemed to me to be the folly of the intended ranchmen in bringing two heavy guns across the country. If they were needed to protect the estate of the settlers they could have been obtained on the Pacific coast; but such pieces were useless, it appeared to me, for Indian fighting, and there was no other to be done.

"I dare say that Major Galloupe is sensitive about it, but I can give the reason," interposed Mr. Bailey, with a smile. "The major was an artillery officer in the Mexican war, and that is the reason. He looks upon rifles and muskets as popguns."

"That's it, exactly," added Major Galloupe, good-naturedly.

"But we got along very well until the Indians got away with eight of our horses. The major is so good-natured that we have had a good time, even since we lost the most of our stock," added Mr. Bailey. "The major proposed to drop our heavy guns into the river."

"We shall have to do that yet," laughed the military gentleman, who was certainly in a remarkably good humor over his misfortune. "We may as well do it here as at any other place. I have made up my mind not to transport them another rod."

"You don't mean so, major?" demanded Mr. Bailey.

"What's the use? I wanted the guns when we got to California. But I do not think we have one chance in a hundred of getting them there. Besides, I don't want them to fall into the hands of the Apaches, for I am afraid they would learn how to use them. I suppose you could not spare me four horses, could you, sir?"

"I should be very glad to oblige you, Major Galloupe; but four additional horses would not do the business for you. I have only one wagon, but we hitch twelve of the best draught animals I could find on my ranch to it; and I don't carry any heavy guns, either."

"Then you don't think four horses could get our wagons through?"

"Not with the guns and ammunition in them. Although I can hardly spare them, I should part with four horses in order to help you out; but I might as well go back as part with eight of my stock."

"I am afraid the two horses will not be enough to haul the wagons even with our scanty store of provisions and stores for the new ranch," added the major, shrugging his shoulders. "We will get out the guns to-night, and drop them into the river."

"I think we need horses more than we do guns," said Mr. Bailey. "We have only six horses left to start our ranch with."

I had an idea, and I was diligently considering it while the two intending ranch-owners were consulting about their situation. I explained to them the nature of the roads over which we had passed, and I was quite satisfied that two horses to each wagon would not be able to haul the wagons alone a portion of the way.

"Well, judge, I suppose you will let some of your strong men assist us to dump them into the river," said the major, when he had fully made up his mind.

"But it seems to be a great pity to destroy so much property."

"We had better destroy the property than sacrifice ourselves in a vain attempt to get through with the guns and ammunition," laughed the major.

"I have an offer to make you; but I hope you won't consider that I am taking an advantage of the circumstances."

"Certainly not, judge. I shall throw the property into the river ; and if I can sell the guns and ammunition for a hundred weight of bacon, what I get will be clear gain," chuckled the major.

"Are you short of provisions?"

"We are ; and if we don't kill an occasional bear, deer, or antelope we shall know what it is to be hungry before we get to the Colorado river."

"But even a hundred pounds of bacon added to the rest of your stores will be too much for your four horses."

"Oh, I mean to pitch one of the wagons into the river with the guns," answered Major Galloupe, as though it were the best joke of the season.

"That would be a good move in your circumstances ; but I will try to better the circumstances. I will give you four horses and two hundred pounds of hams and bacon for the guns, ammunition and the spare wagon and harnesses."

Major Galloupe sprang towards me with extended arms, and I thought he intended to embrace me ; but he only caught each of my hands in one of his own.

"My dear judge, you have made me the happiest man in the valley of the Rio Gila !" he exclaimed as he wrung my hands, and actually danced with joy in front of me. "Four horses and two hundred pounds of bacon ! My dear judge, arn't you cheating yourself ? I did not expect to obtain the full value of the guns ; and I see you haven't a horse here that is worth less than two hundred dollars in the States."

"On the contrary, I think I am cheating you."

"But the guns are very unsalable property in this region," added the soldier. "I was thinking this afternoon that I never lost any guns in the war—I suppose it don't make any difference to you if I had—and I thought, if I had to throw the pair into the Gila, they would be the first guns I ever lost. But I am coming out a rich man!"

"Hardly a rich man, though I think your guns would have been an elephant on your hands in the southern part of California. Then I understand that you accept my offer?"

"Accept it? Why my dear judge, the offer is princely, and I shall be grateful to you as long as I live!" exclaimed Major Galloupe. "You are the most unselfish man I ever met in the whole course of my life. Of course the guns are of no use to you, and you are merely taking them to oblige a poor and distressed fellow-creature."

"I hope to make the guns serviceable to me, though I certainly should never have thought of bringing them to this region."

"In other words, you are willing to profit by the major's folly," added Mr. Bailey.

"I wouldn't give the meanest horse on my place for the guns and ammunition in California; but it is possible that we may remain in this part of the country for two months or longer; and I may find the guns useful in defending my position."

"That is a candid statement," laughed the major.

"I hope they will be useful to you ; in fact, I know they will be, if you are going to stay in this part of the country. I hope you will blow all the Apaches up so high that they will never come down again. You have my best wishes, and I am satisfied that you will make good use of the playthings. I am sorry I am not going to be with you to help use them. By the way, have you any artillerymen in your party?"

"You bet!" exclaimed Ben Cavendish, who was standing by, with several other of the party, listening to the conversation. "I reckon some o' we uns fit into the Mexican war. I sarved in Bragg's battery. Buck Sykes was in another."

"I was at Magenta and Solferino, in the French artillery," added Emile Pont.

"I shall fight mit der artillery in der next war wot I goes into ; and so I knows all about dem dings," added Jacob Yäger.

"I think we are provided with artillerists enough, though I should be glad to have you remain with us, Major Galloupe. But we must attend to loading and unloading the wagons to-night."

Sile Carter called out all the party who were not on guard duty. We loaded all the provisions and stores of the major's party into one wagon, adding to the load the quantity of meat specified. My men, under the direction of Ben Cavendish, handled the guns as though they were playthings, as, indeed, they were to them, for they were delighted to have such effective engines of destruction for our intended campaign.

A portion of the ham and bacon was transferred from the caravel to the wagon I had bought in the trade, and the guns were loaded into the iron ark, though it was not an easy matter to lift them over the high sides. We slept well after our extra exercise at this work. At midnight there was an alarm at the upper post, and all hands turned out. Linn Hoover, who was the sentinel at this point at the time, was sure there was a large body of Indians in the pass just above us. He declared that they all ran off as soon as he fired his gun for the signal.

Not many of us believed that Linn had seen or heard any Indians; but subsequent events led me to the conclusion that he was right. We were soon asleep again, though we put an extra sentinel in the exposed position. We were not disturbed again that night; but it was only because the marauders did not find us in a good position for a raid upon our stock.

The Apaches, or whatever they were, had taken our measure by this time. Thirty-five horses, and a wagon so heavily loaded as the caravel appeared to be, must be a rich prize. Doubtless they saw how many men we had; but the Apaches do not hesitate to stampede the horses of a squadron of United States cavalry if they get the opportunity.

In the morning our guests breakfasted with us, and we assisted them in arranging the new order of things in their transportation. I gave them four good, serviceable horses. The major and his partner rode two of them, and six others were harnessed to

the wagon. The military gentleman bade us adieu in the most affectionate manner, and promised to call at Buena Vista when we returned.

As soon as they were gone, we devoted our attention to our own affairs. The twelve draught-horses were retained upon the caravel. I dismounted half a dozen of the vaqueros, and hitched their horses to the wagon. I allowed five of the best of them to keep their horses, and the others were to act as teamsters, riding on the wagon horses.

By seven in the morning we were in motion again. It was up hill, and the trail was very crooked and rough. But our wagons were so heavily powered that we got along without any difficulty.

Our route was still through a valley; but not far from the Gila, the mountain rose, often in rugged precipices. The region looked as though it had been rent by earthquakes, or other convulsions of nature. Occasionally we saw deep cañons extending through the steeps for we knew not how far.

Far above us, on what seemed to be an unapproachable plateau, we saw green fields and verdant pastures. Again this elevated plain was bare of all signs of vegetation. The valley in which we travelled was as beautiful as a dream of paradise.

While I was enjoying this lovely scene, and rhapsodizing with the boys over it, the advance guard halted, and made signs to the main body. Followed by Hal and Ned, I rode forward.

"Indians!" shouted Rolf Brooks.

I saw them.

CHAPTER XIX.

AFRAID OF INDIANS. — THE PHILOSOPHY OF CIVILIZATION. — THE INDIANS ON THE BLUFF. — LIKE A PROCESSION. — A LONG COLUMN. — WHAT DOES IT MEAN? — VARIOUS SURMISES. — AN ODD SHOW. — AN ESTIMATE OF NUMBERS. — APACHES BEYOND A DOUBT. — THEIR STRATEGY. — THEIR VILLAINOUS CHARACTER. — REVIEW OF AN OLD AFFAIR. — DOUBLING ON US.

THEY are not within half a mile of us !” exclaimed Ned, rather impatiently, as we looked upon the foe.

“They are near enough. I hope they won’t come any nearer to us.”

“Why, judge, you seem to be afraid of Indians,” said Ned, laughing.

“Perhaps I am, my boy ; at any rate, I am not at all anxious to quarrel with them.”

“I suppose, if we should come down to the truth of the case, this country belongs to them, and we are really the intruders,” added Hal, though this was far from being his usual style of remark.

“I think they are entitled to a reasonable share of it ; but I see no reason why a few hundred, or a few

thousand Indians should monopolize a region big enough to afford sustenance to millions of people. They must give way to the advance of civilization. We have bought the land of them when they were reasonable, and the government is able and willing to take care of all the Indians in the nation. A dozen or a hundred men might claim the whole world, as nobles did in feudal times. The progress of the world is not to be stopped by a few hundred Indians, though it may seem like a hard case for them to be deprived of their lands ; but such has been the history of the world — the stronger taking from the weak as their needs required.”

“ But what are those Indians about ? ” asked Ned, who did not seem to be in a mood to consider the philosophy of civilization.

The Indians we saw were on a high bluff, at least two hundred feet above the valley in which we were travelling. A column of them seemed to be marching along the edge of the bluff. It looked like a procession. They were in threes or fours for the most part ; but they moved in better and more systematic order than I had observed in savages before. A few of them had muskets, but most of them had only bows and arrows and clubs.

“ What does all that mean, judge ? ” asked Ned, after we had watched the marching for some time.

“ I don’t know : you are as wise as I am. ”

“ But two or three hundred of them have passed already. How many do you suppose there are of

them? I never saw so many Indians together before since I came into this country."

"That is just what I was thinking," added Hal, and both of the boys were deeply impressed with the number.

"I don't think I ever saw so many of them at one time before."

"Can you make out what they are, judge?" asked Ned.

"They are Apaches, beyond a doubt. I have seen too many of them to be mistaken."

I began to be absolutely amazed at the length of the column on the bluff. We had been observing them for all of half an hour, and I was sure that in this time over a thousand Indians had come in sight. This was the only point at which we could see them, for the place where they showed themselves seemed to be a sort of valley on the bluff.

I looked ahead to see in what direction the column was moving, but not an Indian was to be seen except in this place. When we were tired of watching them, I gave the order for our party to move on, for no portion of the Indian phalanx appeared to come near the trail we were following. For half an hour longer the column was in sight. We passed near enough to the opening in the cliff to see them quite distinctly.

Though our long teams and horsemen made quite an imposing display, the Indians did not appear to notice us, or even to know that we were in existence.

They marched in solemn procession, and I did not observe that one of the savages turned his head.

"That is the oddest show I ever saw," said Ned, after we were weary of watching the procession.

"How many do you suppose there are of them, judge?" asked Hal.

"A thousand Indians are a great many."

"There are more than a thousand of them, judge. I was going to say five thousand," added Hal.

"If we should count all we have seen, I should say that not more than a thousand had appeared."

"At least two thousand," said Ned.

"I think not. Even a thousand of them is an appalling number."

"I have figured it up, and I think there must be at least two thousand," continued Ned. "If there are four in a section, and the sections are ten feet apart, a thousand of them would reach about half a mile; and they have been marching along there for a full hour."

"You must be right, Ned, for figures won't lie when properly treated."

The boy's calculation appeared to be correct; but how two thousand Apaches had got together I could not imagine, unless they were on the eve of inaugurating a general war against the whites. But even if they were massed for such a purpose, they could hardly have been so stupid as to make this wild region their rendezvous. The country would not feed them, and they could not operate to advantage

here, for no other party so large as mine was likely to come in their way.

I could not solve the problem. The panorama of marching Indians was a reality beyond a doubt. While my reason rebelled at the idea of two thousand Apaches in this lonely region, Ned's calculation, what I had seen, and all the rest of the party had seen, demonstrated the fact. I could not reason it out of my mind.

It seemed very strange to me, and contrary to all precedent in what I had seen of Apache strategy, that they should show themselves as they had. They are more like snakes than any other human beings I had ever seen. They crawl miles upon their bellies in order to take their victims unawares. They conceal themselves in the most unexpected places, dropping down from the cliffs above, or springing out of the ground, upon the object of their vengeance or plunder. It was wholly unlike them to make such an exhibition as we were witnessing.

Of course I could not help thinking of a probable conflict with these diabolical fiends, for I can find no better name for them. It describes them better than any other phrase that I can think of. I had seen them at their work of pillage, plunder and death, and I knew all about them. As the case looked now, I was not sorry that I had the two bronze howitzers in the caravel. Just then I thought I should rather have parted with a dozen more horses and half a ton of bacon than with those two guns.

We had not even the Rio Gila between us and this large force of the Indians. They were in the mountains on the south side of the stream, where we were travelling, and they might flock out upon us from any of the cañons that yawned in the cliffs on our right. And this was very near our halting place, where we intended to spend a month or two in search of the silver mine. It was not a pleasing prospect.

"We can't see the Indians now, but I suppose they are marching still," said Ned, as we passed out of sight of the opening. "I haven't any doubt we shall have to fight that army, or a part of it; have you, judge?"

"I hope not."

"I think it would be better if there were not so many of them," added Hal.

"Some of these Indian fighters say it don't make any difference how many there are; that they can whip all that can stand up before them," continued Ned.

"That may be true of some Indians: for instance, such as we encountered while we were crossing the caravel over the Colorado."

"But isn't true of the Apaches," said Ned.

"Certainly not; and the man who speaks lightly of the prowess of the Apaches don't know them, or he is a brag."

"Don't Ben Cavendish talk in that way?" asked Hal, with some diffidence, as though he was not sure that it would do to question the manners or the action

of the Kentuckian, who had certainly won a great reputation for his deeds and good management, and who was exceedingly popular with every member of the party, Hal only excepted.

"Ben don't talk in that way. He grants the wonderful skill, ability and endurance of the Apaches, though he does not consider them invincible, as Jerry Benson does."

"Some of the party said he looked upon the Yumas with contempt," added Hal.

"He didn't consider them worth his powder and lead; and he was right. I fired my gun, and at least twenty of them ran away, though they didn't see me at all. I think you have got a wrong view of the Kentuckian, Hal, and all because he didn't obey your orders on a certain occasion."

"I wasn't thinking of that, judge," pleaded Hal.

"A good general takes counsel of the experienced men under his command; and that was what you ought to have done on that day. With a man of his years and experience, Hal, you were too overbearing. He knew where the Indians were, and he wanted to show you, but you wouldn't hear him. If you had listened to him, and consulted with him he would have obeyed you every time. The result proved that he was right and that you were wrong. The Indians came in sight just where he said they were."

"I think Ben was right on his facts, but the theory was all wrong," answered Hal, mildly; "and I must say he has behaved remarkably well since the case of

discipline. If a man is in command he ought to be obeyed, and be responsible for consequences."

"That is all very pretty; but I should have had to take all the consequences of a failure for appointing a boy to command."

"How is it in the army?"

"We are not the army to begin with. In the army they educate the officers for years in the art of war. When I sent you off that day, I did not think of giving you the command, in the sense you use the term. When a party goes off to do any difficult duty they put their heads together, and become a sort of democratic organization, in which the ablest man comes out the leader. I suppose Ben would obey me against his own judgment, if any great disaster were not likely to follow. But I often give him, Sile Carter and Jerry Benson their own way, for they have seen more of Indians, and have had a wider experience of this kind of life than I have; and I have seen a hundred times more of it than you have."

"I understand the matter better now than I did then," replied Hal, coming as near to a confession as he ever did.

I had hardly finished my review of the affair at Fort Yuma before Ben Cavendish and Sile Carter rode back to our position in the line.

"Them Injens is doublin' on us?" said Sile.

I could not see it, but I was ready to hear the veterans.

CHAPTER XX.

SOME FAMILIAR OBJECTS. — WHERE THE INDIANS WERE. —
BRINGING IT TO A FINE POINT. — TWO-STREAMS CAMP. —
SILE CARTER'S STRATEGY. — TWO THOUSAND INDIANS
EXPLAINED. — AN UNUSUAL DISPLAY FOR APACHES. —
THE RIVER. — CASTLE HILL. — THE DIVIDING CANON.
— OUR PROPOSED CAMP GROUND. — A CHANGE OF
COURSE. — LOWER RIVER.

WHAT do you mean by doubling on us, Sile?" Sile Carter looked quite serious when he announced his interpretation of the movements of the Indians. Ben Cavendish appeared to be as cool, collected, and even indifferent, as usual; but his appearance with Sile to warn me spoke for itself. The veterans had doubtless come to a conclusion in regard to the intentions of the Apaches, and they had come to advise me in regard to the conduct of the expedition.

I had not seen the Indians or heard anything of them since we lost sight of them on the bluff, where we left them marching in solemn stolidity. I could not see how or where they were doubling on us; and I so expressed myself to the veterans.

"They hain't doubled on us yet, jedge; but that's what they are gwine to do," added Ben, positively. "Ef you ride on ahead a piece you will see the whole on't."

"I halted the wagins to tell you how things were in front," added Sile.

"All right; I will ride to the front, and see how it looks."

I had been so busy lecturing Hal in regard to handling the men that I had not taken much notice of the country through which we were passing. If I had, I might have discovered that we were coming to the point described by Don Ramon as the probable location of the silver mine. When I passed through this region before I did not notice the peculiarities of the location with a view to identifying it again.

When Don Ramon described it to me, I recognized the place at once as a spot where we had encamped for the night. I was to make sure of it by two streams that flowed into the Gila on its left bank, within a hundred rods of each other. At the mouth of the first stream there was a pear-shaped island, about five rods long at its greatest diameter. I could not fail to identify the place when we came to it. I had seen one or two objects which I remembered in connection with the camp at Two-Streams, as it was called in my diary. I was not yet sure that we were near the two streams. I could not see anything in the immediate vicinity that satisfied me we were near our resting-place. But old Jerry

had been with us, and he told Sile that this was the approach to the two streams. At my former visit I had not particularly noticed the topography of the country any farther than I have mentioned it. With the exception of the two streams and the island, the region was not perceptibly different from what it had been since we left the Salinas river.

"Don't you see that crest of hills?" said Ben, pointing to the elevations beyond the bluff.

"I see them; and they are about what we have been seeing for several days.

"It was on that bluff that we see them Injens," continued Ben.

"Very true, but that was some miles back."

"I reckon the critters is somewhere on that high ground, jedge."

"No doubt of it; but as the line of hills bent to the southward of us, and as the Apaches have had to cross cañons, and get over a good many hard places, I am satisfied that they are at least a couple of miles behind us."

"Them's jest my sentiments, jedge; but they mought not be behind us much longer."

Ben Cavendish spoke impressively, and I was confident that he and Sile had discovered a real peril in our path.

"We hain't got no time to fool, jedge," added Sile, with a great deal of earnestness. "Do you know the lay of the land?"

"Only in a very general way."

"I cal'late we'd better bring it down to a fine p'int. The river bends round here in a ring almost. 'Tain't more'n a mile over the hills to the river again. If we foller the Gila, it's three miles."

"We camped right over in the middle of that bend the last time we was here," said Jerry, who had come back to join us in the conference. "The two streams and the island are over there."

"Then, that is the place where we shall camp for two months, or thereabouts."

Jerry had identified the Two-Streams camp, and I was satisfied that he was right. We were within a short distance of our destination.

"We may as well go along and get in camp there."

"I don't reckon that's the best way," interposed Ben. "You kin let the head of the line rest till we come up with it. When you git a little further on, you can see the lay of the land better, jedge."

"All right, Ben; we will go ahead and see where we are."

The Kentuckian led the way, and we followed, Sile riding at my side. I judged from the concert of action among them that the three veterans had talked the matter over together and agreed upon what was best to be done. But I began to recall some of the landmarks I had seen before, though everything looked quite different at this season, with a full river and the valley covered with luxuriant grass and foliage around us. Much of the earth which was covered with water now was bare before.

"We cal'late that them Injens is hurryin' on, and that they mean to take us at this next camp; and they couldn't find a better place to give us fits if they looked over all the country between the Rocky and the Coast Mountains."

"That depends a great deal upon how we locate our camp. If I remember right, there is no way to get down from that plateau near the two-river camp."

"Tain't very near, but there is a place, and I cal'late them Injens knows where it is jest as well as they know how to steal a hoss," replied Sile, warmly. "We want to strike that spot afore the cut-throats git there; and we hain't got much time to spare."

"All right, Sile; if it is the proper thing to go there we will go; but I want to look the ground over."

"That's right, jedge; look it over."

"If we have to fight two thousand Indians, Sile, we want to be in position to do it to the best advantage."

Sile reined in his horse and looked at me with astonishment.

"How many, jedge?" he asked, and I saw then that there was a smile of mischief on his wrinkled face.

"Two thousand; Ned Brown estimated the number, and that's what they make it out to be."

"Two thousand!" exclaimed Sile. "Why, bless

your heart, jedge, there ain't more'n a hundred on 'em, if there is that."

"Didn't you see them marching by that opening in the bluff for more than an hour, Sile?"

"Of course, I seen 'em; and Ben Cavendish and me laughed at 'em. 'Paches don't show themselves unless they can make sunthin by it."

"That was what bothered the boys and me—it was so unlike the Apaches to show themselves."

"Well, jedge, they meant to skeer us to death; and they expect we'll give in now as soon as we see 'em. They are comin' arter us; that circus they showed us is as sure a sign as a ring round the moon; and I cal'late they fixed on this place ahead for the strike."

"What do you mean by that circus; and why did you and Ben laugh at it?"

"That was nothin' on airth but a trick. They kept marchin' the same Injens afore us all the time; and I cal'late every one on 'em showed hisself from twenty to forty times. That's the hull on't, jedge, as sure as you was born, and I was born afore you was."

"I thought it might be some sort of a stratagem."

"Ben says he's seen 'em do that sort of thing before. Here we be, jedge, at the head of the line."

"The river winds clean round three miles," said Jerry. "Do you see that bluff stickin' out into the flat?"

"I remember that hill, for I took particular notice of it when we were leaving the Two-Streams camp."

"It is cut off from the high ground by a deep cut, what you call a canon."

"I call it a cañon (can-yon), Jerry."

"Well, there it is, jedge, without no callin'," added Jerry, nettled at my correction of his pronunciation.

"The cañon divides that hill out on the flat, with the sides chopped off till they are right up and down, from the string o' hills."

"I see how it is, though I knew nothing of its formation before."

"One o' them streams runs right along over here," continued Jerry, pointing to the plateau, the bluff of which was here about parallel with the course of the river.

"I can see just where it is by the bushes that grow upon its banks."

"That's Castle Hill—the round hill with the bluffs on the flat," added Ben. "They say it looks like a castle; but I never see no castle, and I dunno' whether it do or not."

"It certainly looks so from this point."

"That stream what you see runs over to the canyon that divides Castle Hill from the string of hills them Injens is on. Then it follers all round the hill, and strikes into the old bed jest afore it gits to the river."

"Then it does not run through the cañon?" asked Ned, who had watched the description very closely.

"It do not," answered Jerry. "I guess some o' the water goes through that way when it's very damp, but the most on't follers the stream round the hill."

I guess it used to run through the canyon, but when it got stopt up, the water made a new track at the foot of the hill. I only guess so, for I don't know nothin' at all about it. The upshot of the hull on't is that there is a place where the brook turns off at the mouth of the canyon where you can git on the high ground; and that's where them Injens will come down to-night."

"The string o' hills runs clean to the Gila river. The Injens will follow the hills and get in right over our heads when we set down in the camp. They can heave rocks over on to us," added Sile.

"The only way to git round this string of hills, when you strike the mouth of this fust stream, is to take to the water, and ford it for a hund'ed rods," said Ben.

"Can we cross the stream at the upper end of the cañon with the wagons, and can we get them upon the high ground?"

"I reckon we can, but it will be a tight pull," replied Ben.

I gave the order to move for the rear of Castle Hill, and the head of the column struck across the flat. In a short time we reached the stream that flowed almost entirely around Castle Hill. I called it Lower River, to distinguish it from Upper River, which flowed at the foot of the string of hills, on the top of which was the plateau. Both were big enough to be called rivers, though the water was only from two to four feet deep.

CHAPTER XXI.

ON THE BANKS OF THE RIVER. — THE FORD. — THE HILL BEYOND IT. — A SCOUTING PARTY. — AN ALARM. — TO THE RESCUE. — OVERLOOKING THE FLAT. — THE FIRING RE-NEWED. — THE FIELD OF ACTION. — ALL OUR OWN WAY. — A HEAVY REPORT. — MORE STRATEGY. — THE ORDER TO MOVE. — WITHOUT A RIDER. — JERRY MISSING.

LOWER River was a larger stream than I supposed before we reached it. We followed it, with a sharp hill on our right, though it was not half the height of Castle Hill. It was about noon when we reached the junction of the river with the cañon. Then I saw that the stream ran between the hill on our right and the chain of hills which had been on our right for several days.

At this point we had to ford the river, which was about four feet deep at the only place where we could cross it, and strike a passable trail on the other side. The chain of hills with the plateau on the top of it had fallen off in height a great deal ; and the elevated land came to a sudden stop at the Gila.

But the ascent on the other side of Lower River was very steep for the passage of the wagons, and I

had some doubts whether the horses would be able to take them up, especially the caravel. At any rate we could occupy the high ground, and thus prevent the Indians from obtaining any advantage over us.

Before we reached the ford, Sile Carter had sent a half-dozen of our best men, including Jerry and Ben Cavendish, to the plateau to reconnoitre, for it must be nearly time for the Apaches to put in an appearance somewhere in the vicinity. I had no doubt the enemy had scouts in position to watch what we were doing and where we went. It seemed to me quite probable that they would interfere to prevent our getting possession of the high ground.

I rode up the steep incline on the other side of the ford in order to find the best road for the caravel. I found a practicable, though difficult path, by keeping near the cañon for some distance and then ascending the hill in an angular direction. I told Hal and Ned to dismount and set up some marks to guide the teamsters.

While they were doing so, and were holding their horses, we heard several shots, which appeared to come from the plateau beyond us. This was just what I anticipated. The six men sent out had encountered the Indians, and the Apaches were not to be trifled with.

"Mount your horses, boys! Never mind the road now!"

Hal and Ned rushed to the spot where I was and sprang lightly into their saddles. Both of them were

excited, and they bounded off and up the steep which led to the higher plateau. I was not disposed to detain them, though I had something more to do before I could go myself. I rode down to the ford, and called all the hunters and vaqueros that were mounted, and told them to follow me. They obeyed with alacrity, and I put Wildcat to his best speed.

Sile Carter soon came up with me. He was examining his double-barrelled gun as he rode, and I saw that he regarded the alarm as far more serious than such occasions had ordinarily been. When his gun was in satisfactory condition, he slung it back on his shoulders, and urged his horse to greater speed, for he was falling behind me.

"Is it possible that there are any Indians on the flat below, Sile?" I put this question to him when it occurred to me that a portion of the enemy might have been sent below to attack us in that direction.

"I don't b'lieve any on 'em's down there; cause why? I don't see how on airth they could have got down," replied Sile; but I saw that he looked not a little anxious. "I have kept my eyes peeled all the time the last three days, and I ain't seen a single place where they could have got down."

"We have seen no end of cañons in the rocks, and they may have come out of some of these. They may have found a way to make the descent into the cañons somewhere in the interior."

"That's so, jedge, as sure as you live and I live; and I've lived longer than you have. We ain't left

nothin' but peons and cow-boys to look out for the wagons and hosses."

I concluded to send Buck Sykes and four others back to guard the camp. But coming at this moment to a projection in the cliff on the right, from which a full view of the ford could be obtained, I instructed Buck and the men detailed to serve with him on this point to remain here. No Indian could approach the ford without being seen by them; and they would be within supporting distance if we needed their assistance.

I still made one of eight men on the way to reinforce Ben Cavendish. Since the first shots which had attracted our attention we had heard no more firing. We rode about half a mile. I could see nothing of our own men, or of the enemy. I found that what had looked like a plateau from below was very much broken up, and there were plenty of rocks scattered about on the plain. There was some wood and many bushes.

As we advanced, the firing was suddenly renewed. Our men now fired almost continuously. It was probable that the Indians had fallen back at the first fire, and had rallied for the attack. We had gone but a short distance farther before several arrows dropped near us.

Hal and Ned were ahead of us still, and I could see nothing of them. I hoped they would use ordinary discretion in taking care of themselves, though I hardly expected this of Hal, if he got separated from Ned.

"I see how 'tis, jedge," said Sile, checking his horse. "Ben is over in yonder. I guess Ben's got 'em in a tight place."

So it seemed to me. On our right was a mass of rock, extending out to the edge of the precipice. On the left was a collection of bowlders, of the size of a big elephant, for each of them looked something like this animal. Our men were behind them, for Ben Cavendish was a prudent general, and was not ashamed to fight behind a breastwork of any sort that he could find.

We rode over to the friendly shelter of these rocks. From behind them our men were picking off the Indians as fast as one of them showed his head. We left our horses in a secure place where we could regain them when needed. Between us and the ledge of rocks near the bluff was an open way, through which the Apaches had doubtless intended to pass; but that was now impossible, for the opening was covered by our marksmen.

Hal and Ned fell to the work assigned to them with a zeal which was likely to be very damaging to the enemy. The Apaches had no such cover as that Ben Cavendish had chosen for his party. They could not stand up under the fire of the hunters, but they made frequent dashes as though they meant to end the skirmish in a hand to hand encounter.

The boys and myself were behind a bowlder which was in sugar-loaf form in front. Behind it was another rock in contact with it, but not more than

half as high. Ned had climbed upon the lower elevation, and was watching his opportunity over the top of the higher one. Hal was at one side and I was at the other.

Every time the enemy rushed forward, one or more of their number dropped, and the rest rushed back, bearing their wounded with them. It was a monotonous sort of an engagement, though it seemed to have its excitement to the hunters and the boys. I did not think the Apaches would stand it a great while, for they were getting the worst of it. They were losing their men, while so far not one of ours had been hit either by an arrow or a musket-ball. The Indians were provided with old flint-lock muskets in small numbers, and they were not effective against the first-class weapons in the hands of the expeditionists.

"How many do you think there are of them, Ned?"

He had the most sightly place, and he had the best chance to estimate the number of the foe.

"I don't think that more than fifty have shown themselves at once," replied Ned. "We are having it all our own way, and there won't be as many of them as fifty much longer."

"Can you see where they are now?"

"No, sir; they run back and conceal themselves among the bushes. I can't see a single one of them now."

I walked over to the position where Sile Carter was on the lookout for the head of an Indian. I

spoke to him, but he did not take his eye off the spot where the last of the enemy had disappeared. He had fired but once, yet I was morally certain that an Apache had bit the dust when his gun went off.

"This is getting to be dull music, Sile."

"It is kinder quiet jest at this minute," replied he, with his eye still fixed on the position of the enemy.

"I don't like this way of doing it."

"What more can we do, jedge?"

"I am not sure that the Indians are not fooling us, Sile."

"What do you mean, jedge?" demanded Sile, with a start, though he did not divert his gaze from the bushes.

"When you can't see the enemy, you don't know where they are. It seems to me that the rascals are not coming out again. It won't take them long to find out that this is a losing game to them."

At that instant we heard a heavy report off to the left of us, that is, back from the river. It had occurred to me that there might be a passage to our present rear in this direction.

"That's Jerry Benson's rifle!" exclaimed Sile, apparently perplexed to explain how the report should come from that direction. "I guess Jerry went over there to look out for the Injens, and found some."

"But that looks bad, Sile. Where is Ben Caven-dish?"

I did not like the appearance of things at all; and it seemed to me that the Kentuckian, who was fight-

ing this battle, was deceived in regard to the intentions of the enemy. It was not like the Apaches to rush before our guns and then retreat, as they had been doing. I could not get rid of the idea that they were doing this thing to hold our force where it was while they opened another way to reach our horses and wagons. But I had not any more than got the thought through my head before Ben Cavendish stalked up to our position.

"Straddle your hosses, boys; there nothin' more to do hyer," said he, in his cool, indifferent tones. "The Injens is tryin' to git round us. But it will take them an hour to git to the ford, and we kin git there in five minutes. No hurry, but it's time to be movin'."

I was glad to see that Ben had anticipated my thoughts, and taken care to keep himself posted in regard to the position and movements of the enemy. My confidence in him was fully sustained. We sprang into the bushes in the rear of our position, and mounted the horses. One horse appeared to have no rider.

"Whose horse is that?"

I was not near enough to the animal to determine whose it was. It indicated that one of our men was wandering about the field of the skirmish.

"That's Jerry's hoss," said Sile Carter. "Why ain't he with the rest on us?"

We waited as long as it was prudent to stay, but Jerry did not come.

CHAPTER XXII.

FEARS IN REGARD TO JERRY BENSON.—BEN CAVENDISH
SELECTS A SEARCHING PARTY.—DANGEROUS DUTY FOR
BOYS.—SOMETHING ABOUT LEADERS.—OUR PARTY.—
OMINOUS SHOTS.—A SUDDEN HALT.—A LOOK ON THE
FLAT.—A DEAD SHOT.—OTHER SUFFERERS.—WHAT I
SAW.

WE looked at one another with something like
dismay when we realized that Jerry was miss-
ing. But it was possible, and even probable, that
he was safe, for he was a zealous Indian fighter, and
he might be following the enemy to obtain accurate
information in regard to their movements.

"I was going out in the direction of the hills to
look after the Injens, but Jerry wanted to go, and
stuck to it so hard that I gin it up and let him go,"
said Ben Cavendish. "I hope nothin's happened to
him."

"Did you see him again after you sent him away?"

"Never sot eyes on him agin."

I was greatly alarmed, for I feared that he had
been captured by the Apaches, which I regarded as a
hundred times worse than being shot dead on the

field, but I was not quite willing to believe that Jerry would allow himself to be taken alive.

"I reckon we hain't got no time to lose," added Ben. "We ought to be in a good position and have things fixed afore them Indians git over to the ford."

"Whatever happens, I shall not allow Jerry to be abandoned as long as there is a possibility of doing anything for him."

"Good, jedge! I reckon you was born in old Kaintuck; or ef you wan't, you ought to have been. I like the cap'n that stands by his men; and I thought a heap of Jerry besides," said Ben, with enthusiasm.

"We have no time for compliments. What shall we do? That's the question."

"I reckon we'd better divide," replied Ben. "I'll take four of the spryest of the men, and go and look arter Jerry. Sile, with the rest on you, shall git to the ford as quick as creation will let you. Take in the men you left on the bluff, Sile. You hain't got no more use for them out there."

"Pick your men quick, Ben."

"I want Ned for one," added the Kentuckian.

"Ned! Why, he's nothing but a boy!"

"So much the better. He's young and spry; and I'd like three more jest like him."

"Ask Ben to take me," said Hal, earnestly, to his companion.

"Hal is another jest like me," added Ned, to the Kentuckian.

"So he is, sonny; but he ain't quite so steady as

you be. Howsomdever, I'll take him ef you say so, Ned."

"Thank you, Ben; I will do my best for you," said Hal, delighted with the chance to engage in the dangerous service.

"Jake's my next man," added Ben. "Bridge will do for the last one. I reckon I've got the best ones for my work."

Some of the hunters called Emile Pont, "Pong," and some interpreted the word and called him "Bridge." He answered equally well to all these names. I was not pleased with the idea of the boys taking part in Ben's enterprise; but as they were suited to his purpose, I could not refuse to let them go. I was too heavy myself to make one of this select party; and I thought it would be a good chance to let Hal redeem his character, especially as he manifested a most excellent spirit. I was glad to have this assurance that the Kentuckian bore him no ill-will on account of the affair near Fort Yuma.

I had long since found that the men worked better and fought better when led by one of their own style and manner. They were a little inclined to think I put on airs if I took the immediate direction in an affair like the present. Besides I thought men like Ben Cavendish and Sile Carter were more competent for just this kind of business than I was. I reserved the right, therefore, to veto their orders, and to take the command myself at any time, but I gave the lead to these men. Jerry was a better follower than

leader, for his opinions were too strong at times, so that they made him unreasonable.

Ben Cavendish did not lose a moment after he had selected his party. He dashed off at a gallop, followed by his men, towards the hills to the south of us. In a moment they had disappeared behind the rocks. I hardly expected to see them again that day, if it should prove that Jerry had been captured by the Apaches. I believed Ben would find him if he was still in the land of the living.

Sile Carter was no more inclined than Ben to delay, though he was very anxious in regard to the fate of Jerry, who had been his friend for many years before I knew either of them. Like Jerry he was a man well along in years, though his powers of body or mind did not seem to be impaired.

"Come along, boys!" shouted he as soon as Ben and his party were well off. "I guess we shall have some music afore night."

He put his heels to the flanks of his spirited horse, and we followed him at a breakneck gallop. I had the fastest horse in the party, with the exception of Giant, and I placed him at my side.

"What do you suppose has become of Jerry, Sile?"

"I'm afeared he got into trouble. His rheumatis' bothered him this morning, and I don't b'lieve he could use his pins as well as a feller ought to that fights or plays a game with 'Paches," replied Sile, shaking his head as he looked at me to see if I had any opinion to give on the subject.

"The Indians must have been close by him when he started out, for I was talking with the boys about their movements when they did not come out any more."

"I know Jerry got a shot at 'em, for I am sartain sure that was a speech from his blunderbuss I heard; for Jerry don't waste no powder and lead."

"Then you think he has been taken by the Indians?"

"I'm afeerd that's what it's come to," added Sile, looking me full in the face.

"I hope not; Jerry wouldn't let the Apaches take him while there is anything left of him."

"Creation! What's that?" exclaimed Sile, as we heard the reports of several pieces.

The sound came from directly ahead. Was it possible that the Indians had closed in on the ford, and surrounded the wagons, and the few men we had left there? I was startled at the very thought. Sile was never knocked out of his play by anything unexpected, or by his fears or his feelings. He spurred up his horse, and we all increased our speed with him.

"I guess them shots was fired by the men we left on the bluff," added Sile. "If that's so, I guess we're all right."

"But they may have seen the Indians coming up from the southward. According to Ben Cavendish, they had to make a big sweep before they could reach the ford, and it is not time for them in that

direction. I think you are right; and there must be Apaches down on the flat."

"I guess that's what the matter," said Sile, straining his eyes to get a view of the situation. "But 'twon't take long to see what the matter is."

In a few minutes more we discovered the men we had left on the projecting bluff. They were lying down on the edge of the precipice, looking intently down upon the flat. Possibly we were a quarter of a mile from them. But I was satisfied that none of the enemy had reached the ford from the flat.

"Halt!"

I gave this order, and reined in my horse. Sile and the others obeyed promptly. We dismounted, and leaving the horses in charge of a couple of vaqueros, we walked stealthily to the bluff. We crawled the last part of the way in Apache fashion, so that we need not be seen by the enemy on the flat, for the firing of Buck Sykes' party indicated that there were Indians there.

It was not possible to get to the ford without crossing an open place on the flat, which was commanded by the projecting bluff, in possession of our men. It occurred to me that the Indians had fallen back when Buck's party fired. The fact that we heard no shots since the first assured me this was the fact.

If the Indians had been within rifle range of the projecting bluff, they must have been somewhere near the spot where I ordered the halt. I thought we could help out the work begun by Buck Sykes.

Sile crawled faster than I could, and he gained the edge of the bluff first. He had scarcely reached it before he levelled his piece and fired. The report was followed by a fierce yell from the flat below. The Down-Easter leaped to his feet like a young man. He seemed to have no fear of the enemy below ; in fact they were too far off to reach us with their bows, or with the old flint-locks in their possession.

"I knocked one on 'em !" exclaimed Sile.

We had crawled to our position to avoid being seen, and not to escape the consequences of the fire of the Apaches. We could laugh at them at any long range. They were dangerous only in reasonably close quarters.

I rose to my feet more slowly than Sile had performed the same act. Behind the bushes, to the west of the opening, we discovered a group of about a dozen Indians. One of them lay upon the ground ; and I judged that he was dead. The others were making more of a commotion than they usually make when one of their number drops. I concluded that Sile's shot had brought down some important person. I afterwards learned that it was the son of the chief who led the party.

The Indians seemed to be in a panic. They were making preparations to bear away the dead or wounded warrior, as the case may have been. I told Sile to lie down again, and did so myself.

"I ain't afeerd on 'em, jedge," replied Sile, as he obeyed the order.

"I didn't suppose you were ; but I prefer to work in the dark, for we can do better if they don't know that we are here. I don't think they have seen us yet."

"I don't b'lieve they have. If they had they would not have stopped there in full sight of us all this while," answered Sile.

"By all creation t'other side up !" exclaimed Linn Hoover.

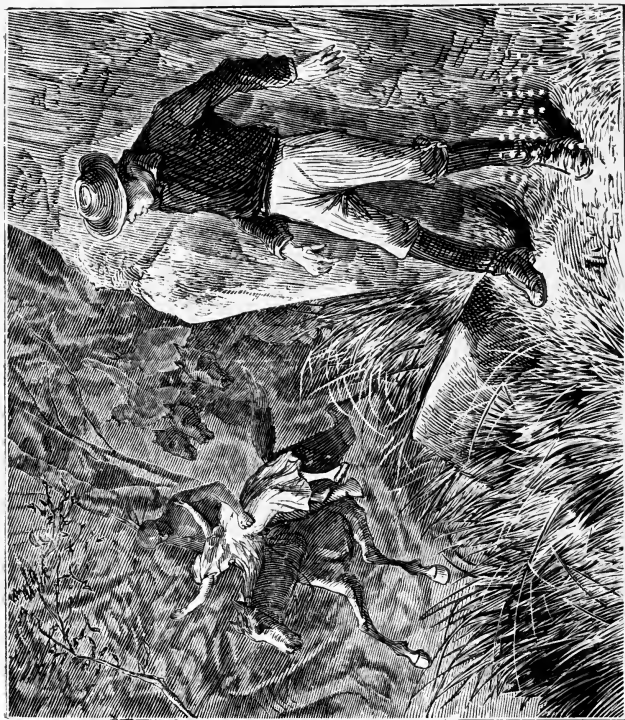
"What's the matter now ?"

"There's something going on farther down the flat," replied Linn.

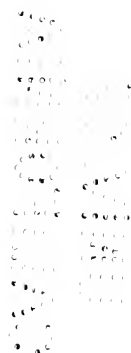
I cast my eyes down the trail. Just as far off as I could discern objects, I saw what appeared to be a party of travellers attacked by Indians. I had a field glass in a case attached to my saddle. I sent one of the men for it, and through it I saw a group of mounted Indians, attacking a party of a dozen horsemen, with a wagon and several pack-horses. Linn Hoover was correct as to what he saw.

The attack was so sudden and furious, judging from what I saw, that the party had no chance to make an effectual resistance. Of course the travellers were going east, or we should have seen them before. But they did the best they could, and I saw several of the savages fall.

One man had his horse shot under him, and I saw him run behind a high rock. With the glass I could distinctly see him in his hiding-place. He appeared to have lost his arms in the fall, and had nothing to



"WHAT I SAW THROUGH THE GLASS." — Page 192.



do anything with, so that this fact explained his taking to the rocks.

Part of the scene was obscured by a clump of trees; and presently the scene shifted by the action of the combatants so that it was beyond this obstruction to my view. But we could hear the report of the shots that were fired by the men in the conflict.

"What do you make on't, jedge?" asked Sile, whose eyesight did not permit him to get a very clear idea of what was going on at the trail below.

"The Indians have attacked the travellers, and so far as I can judge, the white men are getting the worst of it;" and it looked to me that this was one more to be added to the long list of atrocities perpetrated by the Apaches.

Just at this moment, and before I had quite finished my reply to Sile, a new scene passed before my glass. The man concealed behind the rock was in the foreground, and farther back was a party of mounted Indians. In the arms of the leader was a woman, with her arms flying in the air, as though she was struggling to escape from her captor. This was all I could see; for after they had passed the opening in the flat, they disappeared behind a line of trees and bushes. But I have the startling picture, as I saw it with my glass, still in my mind.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SILE'S INTEREST IN THE LADY. — THE DOWN-EASTER OBJECTS TO MY THEORY. — TO HORSE AGAIN. — A WHISTLING BULLET. — THE PROJECTING BLUFF. — THE FORD. — DINNER LATE IN THE DAY. — MOVING THE CARAVEL. — A STRONG POSITION. — UNLOADING THE WAGONS. — PLANTING THE GUNS. — REPEATING RIFLES. — RETURN OF THE SEARCHING PARTY. — THE LITTER.

I TOLD Sile Carter what I had seen through my field-glass. When I told him there was a lady in the case, he manifested the most intense indignation ; and I believe if we could have got the horses down into the flat, he would have chased the Indian captors of the lady to the end of the earth.

We had lost sight of the fighting party behind the clump of trees, and we had no means of knowing how the battle was likely to terminate. It was evident that there were a great many Indians in the vicinity, for we had seen three parties within a couple of hours.

It has taken me some time to tell what I saw through my glass ; but I suppose not more than five or ten minutes had elapsed since Linn Hoover first called my attention to the attack in the trail. Time

flies fast when events that color a whole lifetime pass within a few minutes.

When I dropped my glass and looked at the party with the wounded man, I found they were still there. They seemed to be at work on the fallen man. I brought my field-glass to bear upon the scene. The party were about half way between the spot by the river where the fight was in progress and our position on the bluff.

"I guess we hadn't oughter stop here any longer," said Sile Carter. "How do we know but the Indians have busted in upon the ford, and tooken off the hosses and the wagons, and them great guns?"

"I don't think they can get away with the caravel, though they may with the wagon. But, as you say, we must not stay here any longer."

"Shall we shoot the rest o' them Injens afore we leave? I s'pose every one on 'em will kill half a dozen white men afore he passes in his chips, and I really don't think you ought to let 'em run wild any more'n you can help, jedge."

"I do not fire on an Indian unless it is necessary to do so."

"Don't you think it's necessary to kill off them varmints behind them bushes."

"I do not think so. We are in no immediate danger from them, and they are not moving upon the ford; if they were it would alter the case."

"That's puttin' a tremenjous fine p'int on to it, jedge. Don't you cal'late them Injens will kill off every white

man that falls in their way? Didn't you see 'em through your squint glass carryin' off a woman?"

"Will shooting half a dozen of those men, who don't suspect that any one sees them, bring the girl back again?"

"I can't say it will."

"If it would, I would help you shoot the whole of them."

"Every one we kill will make one less to fight in the future. I guess you air too notional about Injens, jedge. But if you say we ain't to tech 'em with our lead, we won't stop here no longer."

"I shall not kill them for the fun of it, bad as they are. I do not feel justified in doing anything more than defending our party and rendering needed help to travellers who require assistance."

"Git on your hosses, boys!" shouted Sile, who was evidently disgusted with my logic and practice.

We all stood up as the conclusion of the whole matter. Then our ears were greeted with a wild yell from the party behind the bushes, and it was clear that they now saw us for the first time. If they understood the situation at all, I have no doubt they thought I was a fool, and I was inclined to think so myself, when I heard a bullet whistle near my head.

But we had only to move a few steps back from the bluff to be out of their sight, and we did not care to be made a target for their practice. We mounted our horses, and hastened in the direction of the ford. In a few minutes we reached the projecting bluff,

where Buck Sykes was overlooking what was done in the valley.

Sile relieved the party from duty at that post, and directed them to follow to the ford. Buck reported that he had discovered the Apaches we had seen crawling like snakes towards the ford. He had fired the first shot at them himself, and had seen one of them spring to his feet and then leap into the air. They dodged in behind a clump of bushes, and he had not seen them since.

Sile gave him the complement to his narrative as we rode along. He had neither seen nor heard anything from the Indians on the high ground, and as his position commanded a view of the approaches to the ford, I was satisfied that the band we had engaged had not yet made their appearance in the vicinity.

"I really think sunthin' ought to be done about them folks that lost the lady in the fight," said Sile, as we were approaching the ford.

"I will do anything, you may be sure, as soon as we are in a safe position. But I don't feel that we ought to sacrifice ourselves for the benefit of others. If our horses are captured, we shall have to fight our way back to Buena Vista in bad condition."

"I guess you're right, jedge. We couldn't do much without what's in them wagins; but when we git fixed here for the long stop, I should like to foller up them Injens to the end of the world; I mean them that kerried off the lady."

"We will see what can be done,"

Just above the ford was a considerable sheet of water, forming quite a respectable pond. We let our horses drink in this, and the water was as clear as crystal. While we were there, some of the vaqueros came up from the ford with the team-horses. They had had a listless time of it, for they had neither seen nor heard of any Indians.

It was now about two in the afternoon, and I directed the peons to serve the dinner I had ordered them to prepare when we started. It was late and the men were very hungry. We were in a safe position, for the ground was all open in the vicinity of the pond, and we could see any foe that approached. If we could get the enemy on the open ground, we could take care of them, for they could not stand up against the unerring aim of our hunters.

After dinner I ordered all the draught-horses, eighteen in number, to be hitched to the caravel. With this team, we had no difficulty in taking the caravel up out of the river, and up the steep beyond. The same team brought up the wagon, and it seemed to me that our troubles had come to an end for the present.

While I was on the hill above the ford, I took a careful survey of the country between the two rivers, both of which were in sight at the same time from the position I occupied. The centre of Castle Hill was nearly as high as the elevation on which I stood. The dark cañon effectually separated the two. Suddenly it struck me, as if by inspiration, that Castle Hill

was just the place for our camp during our long stay in this region. I saw at a glance that ten thousand Indians could not conquer us in that position as long as our provisions held out. Castle Hill, it seemed to me, was impregnable.

But the hill might as well have been in the moon as within a few rods of us, for a cañon between one and two hundred feet deep yawned between the two hills. It is true it was not more than thirty feet wide; but it might as well have been a thousand, for we had no means of crossing it with the horses and the wagons. I walked along the edge of the cañon, and examined the position very carefully. The more I saw of Castle Hill the more it increased my desire to establish our camp for the summer in such a secure location.

I could not then think of any way to transport the wagons across the gaping chasm. But if we did not camp on Castle Hill, we should occupy the other hill; and I decided to unload the caravel where it was. In the bottom of the ark I had a case of Sharpe's rifles, a repeating weapon which would do enormous execution. If I had expected to encounter Indians so soon, I should have taken this case out before. I wanted to get at the rifles now, for they would add many men, in effect, to our force, by making one equal to three or four.

The two heavy guns we had bought of Major Galoupe were hoisted out of the caravel, and mounted upon their carriages. It was possible that we might have occasion to use them within the next few hours.

It seemed to me to be time that the Indians who had been checked on the high ground should reach this end of the ridge, if Ben Cavendish's calculation in regard to their intentions was correct.

Buck Sykes directed the men in making some platforms for the guns, and we soon had them in position to command the approaches to the hill. One of them was pointed at the ford, and the other at the narrow pass between the pond and Upper River. It seemed to me that with these twelve-pounders and Sharpe's rifles half a dozen men could defend our stock and wagons from all the Indians in the territory.

I very much desired to ascertain the fate of the party who had been attacked on the trail. But five of our party were absent engaged in the search for Jerry Benson. Besides Hal, Ned, and myself, we had ten men whom I called the hunters to distinguish them from the vaqueros and peons. Of the hunters only seven were in the camp at this time, not more than enough to hold the position. Of the eight vaqueros, some were very good and brave men; but I was not willing to depend upon them in an expedition on the flat. It was not prudent to attempt to do anything for the outside party who had been attacked.

"There comes Ben Cavendish and his party!" exclaimed Sile, while I was looking wistfully at Castle Hill. "They are fetchin' a litter in with 'em; and that looks bad."

I hastened with Sile to meet the returning party, both of us filled with anxiety.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT THE FORD. — THE FACES OF HAL AND NED. — THE HORSE LITTER. — WOUNDED ? — NOT WOUNDED, BUT DEAD. — A VERY SAD OCCASION. — HOW IT HAPPENED. — A DEEP BURIED ARROW. — THE DEAD INDIAN. — MELANCHOLY REFLECTIONS. — DINNER FOR THE SEARCHING PARTY. — RECITAL OF THE EVENTS ON THE FLAT. — HAL EXCITED. — AN IMPROBABLE STATEMENT. — READY FOR AN ARGUMENT. — THE LETTER FROM JUANITA. — HAL TRIUMPHANT.

BOTH Sile and I were filled with apprehension when we saw the litter. It was evident that Jerry Benson had been wounded in his encounter with the Indians. The old man was a general favorite in the camp, and the fact that something had happened to him created a greater sensation than the appearance of a hundred Apaches would have produced.

Most of the hunters followed Sile and me to the ford. The litter consisted of two long poles, with short pieces lashed across. It was a horse litter. Jacob rode directly ahead of Ben, and the ends of the pole were suspended from the backs of the horses. Behind rode Hal and Ned. The moment I saw Ned's face I

knew that something serious had happened to Jerry ; and Hal's face was hardly less expressive.

"I see that you have found Jerry."

I was the first to speak. I don't think I could have told from the expression on Ben Cavendish's face that any unusual event had occurred. He was solemn and serious, as he always appeared, but no more so ; and if the world had suddenly come to an end I doubt if the appalling event would have changed his looks.

"What there is left on him," replied the Kentuckian, hardly looking at me as he spoke.

"How badly is he wounded?" As I asked the question I thought how badly off we were for hospital supplies, or the means of attending to a dangerous wound.

"Wounded, jedge?" said Ben, looking into my face as though he thought I was quizzing him.

"Is he dangerously wounded?"

"He ain't wounded at all, jedge!" exclaimed Ben.

"Not wounded? Why do you bring him in a litter then?"

"He ain't wounded ; he is dead — dead as a last year's corn stalk !"

"Dead !"

"Dead !" repeated all who were near enough to hear the melancholy announcement.

I had not expected anything so bad as this, and I was almost paralyzed by the intelligence. Jerry was my oldest friend, and had been with me longer than

any other man in the expedition. I felt as though I had lost a brother; and all that Jerry had been to me, and all that he had done for me, crowded up before me as I stood in the presence of his dead body.

I looked about among our people, and I saw that some of them were shedding tears. I felt like doing the same myself, for there is something intensely sad in death away from home and friends; in the wild regions where we could only hurry the body into the ground, or conceal it in the interstices of the rocks, so that the savage foe could not desecrate the remains.

I directed several of the hunters to take the body from the litter, and convey it respectfully to our camp. Sile Carter took charge of this sad office, and I saw that the poor fellow could hardly keep from sobbing. He had faced death a thousand times himself without wincing; but he seemed to be almost a baby before the remains of his friend.

"How did it happen, Ben?"

The Kentuckian and the boys had ridden their horses into the water and had stopped to let them drink. The boys watched the mournful party that bore the remains of poor Jerry to the camp.

"I hain't the least idee how it happened," replied Ben. "We found him not fifty rod from where we fought them Indians, with a arrow driven into his right temple."

"Sile and I heard the report of his gun."

"He couldn't have fired his gun arter that arrer was shot into his brains ; and he must have let it off before he was hit," added Ben.

"Not far from him we found a dead Indian," added Hal. "His head was half blown off ; and Jerry must have shot him before he was hit himself."

"This is sad business, Ben."

"Of course it is. But it can't be helped. Tain't no use to cry about it, though. You can't fotch him back to life if you cry a whole pond full of water. Jerry has passed in his chips ; and he'll never chase no more Apaches," added the Kentuckian, whose philosophy appeared to correspond with the expression of his face.

"It can't be helped, of course ; and we have no time to go into a season of mourning, if we were inclined to do so ; but we have more feeling than the rocks under our feet ; at least some of us have."

"I reckon that means that I hain't got no feelin's ; but I have. I reckon I feel as bad as any on you ; but we may have them Apaches down upon us in the next seven minutes and a half."

"I was not thinking of you when I made the remark. I know you have feelings, Ben ; and it is not always those who make the most fuss about it that feel the deepest."

"That's true as preachin', jedge. We can't do nothin' for dead folks, and we must look out for the livin'. I reckon the boys need some grub, for they have been as good as little chickens, and wan't no

more afeerd of Apaches than any chickens would be."

"Dinner is all ready for you ; and I told Linchpin to have a good meal for you ; and I thought Jerry would come to share it with you."

"Jerry don't wan't nothin' more in these diggins, jedge. I wanted to go out and look arter them Injens. I was ready and willin' to go ; but Jerry stuck to it that he ought to go ; and I gin in to him. I reckon I'm sorry I did now ; for I don't reckon you'd felt so bad about it ef it hed been me instid of him. Howsomdever, it can't be helped, for it ain't left to us to say who shall shuffle off fust."

We went sadly to the camp, and the searching party took their dinner. While they were eating I told them what had happened in their absence. I gave them the particulars of the two scenes we had beheld from the bluff. I described the shooting of the Indian near the river first, and the attack upon the party in the train, winding up with the capture of the woman.

I had scarcely finished the details of the carrying off of the female before Hal sprang to his feet, and forgot the slice of ham that was uneaten in his fingers. Ben heard it all with his usual stoicism, and Ned with lively interest, but without a demonstration of any kind.

"Did you see the woman, judge?" demanded Hal, in great excitement.

"I did, my boy ; but you needn't get excited about

it. I saw the whole that I have described through the glass; and it is still a round picture in my mind."

"Was she young or old?" asked Hal, feverishly.

"How far do you suppose it is from the bluff to the place where the attack was made, Hal?"

"It may have been half a mile; it must have been, as you describe the place."

"Do you think I could tell the age of a woman half a mile from me?"

"But you said you had your field-glass; and you say that it is a very powerful one," added Hal, who did not like to be charged, directly or indirectly, with asking absurd questions.

"I can't say that I even saw the face of the woman, as she was struggling in the grasp of a muscular Apache, with his horse going at a dead run."

"Couldn't you make out anything about her, judge?" asked Hal, who seemed to have a strange interest in the event, aside from the atrocities included in the brief drama I had beheld.

"I could only make out that it was a woman. She may have been sixteen or sixty, though she was trying to make a vigorous resistance in the hands of her captor."

"Judge, I believe that woman was Juanita!" exclaimed Hal, gorging the rest of his meat, as though he must get it out of the way in order to be ready for the greatest event of his lifetime.

"Juanita!"

I was even more taken aback than Hal had been. She was the beloved daughter of my friend and intended partner in the silver mine expedition. I had expected him, but had not heard a word from him. But I concluded that Hal's lively recollection of the former capture of Juanita led him to put a bad phase on the narrative I had recited. Certainly I could think of no way in which he could be better posted in regard to the movements of Don Ramon than I was myself.

"Juanita!" exclaimed Ned, in the same breath with me. "I should say that it was quite impossible it could have been the daughter of Don Ramon."

"Quite impossible."

Ned spoke my sentiments exactly. Hal had done nothing but think of the beautiful Mexican maiden during the winter and spring, and he could not keep her wholly out of his talk. I have no doubt he thought a hundred times more than he said on such a subject.

"I don't think it is at all impossible. Didn't you write to Don Ramon that you was going to search for the silver mine?" demanded Hal, who was evidently prepared to make a strong argument in favor of his side of the question.

"I did write to him, giving full particulars of what I intended to do, and the route I should take to reach this region. But I have heard nothing from him; and if he intended to join me, he would certainly have written me to that effect, or even sent a special

messenger to inform me of his purpose. He knows what this part of the country is even better than I do ; and he would not have run the risk of taking his daughter through this territory alone when he could just as well have done it with our party."

I did not believe Hal could get over so clear an argument as this was ; and I banished from my mind the possibility that the unfortunate female could have been Juanita.

"I happen to know that Don Ramon was coming to join you !" exclaimed Hal, earnestly

"You happen to know it !"

"I happen to know it, judge," persisted Hal.

"How could you know it, Hal? If any letter was sent to you, had it any better chance of reaching its destination than one from Don Ramon to me?"

"One, two, or three mails may have been captured by the Indians, but one that contained a letter for me may have come while all yours were lost. In fact one did come for me, and I have it now," added Hal, triumphantly.

"And you did not say a word to me about it?"

"And you did not say a word to me that you had not received expected letters until we started on this expedition, judge," replied Hal, warmly.

Hal suggested the truth. He and I were not always on confidential terms.

CHAPTER XXV.

HAL'S EXPLANATION. — THE BOY IS EXCUSED. — HE BECOMES DESPERATE. — BEN'S VIEWS OF THE CASE. — THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD. — A SAD OCCASION. — THE GRAVE ON THE HILL. — THE LAST RITES. — HOW WE LEFT THE GRAVE. — CASTLE HILL AS A FORTRESS. — BEN EXPRESSES HIS OPINION. — PREPARATIONS FOR THE BRIDGE. — THE EXPEDITION TO THE FLAT.

THEN you have known that Don Ramon was coming for weeks, when I have not heard a word from him?"

It seemed very strange that he had not given me a hint of some sort. But then it occurred to me that Hal and I had not always agreed very well, aside from a want of confidence on my part. Hal was in his tantrums before we started, and it was only until within a few days that entire harmony had been restored. It was possible that he had kept his intelligence to himself out of spite; but more likely because he did not like to be teased in regard to the beautiful Mexican. Possibly he feared that he might be called upon to read so important a letter, or that he would be "pumped" to know what it contained. On the

whole I thought Hal's position was more reasonable than when I first looked at it.

"You and I have not been on the best of terms all the time, judge; and I didn't care to have it known that I had a letter from Juanita. Besides she only speaks of coming this way as a matter of course, as though we all knew about it," Hal explained; and I was satisfied that he wished he had mentioned the letter, or at least the important information it contained.

I thought it prudent to say nothing more about the matter. The boy was in love; and I am a bachelor. I thought that explained any remarkable conduct on his part. He had been doing very well lately, and I desired to encourage him all I could. After all, it was not very strange, under the circumstances, that he did not tell anybody he had a letter from "his girl."

"It is all right, Hal; and I won't find any fault at all with you. I don't see that it would have made a particle of difference if I had read your letter."

"But Juanita is in the hands of the Indians, and I am wasting my time in eating ham and hard tack!" exclaimed the boy, who was inclined to jump up into the air in order to do something, whether it did any good or not.

"I should have sent out a party to look out for the travellers, and I considered the matter with that intention. I found that it was not prudent to do anything until your party returned. We had only seven

hunters left to guard the camp; and we have been expecting an attack from the Apaches every minute for the last two hours."

"I reckon there won't be no attack to-day, jedge," added Ben. "We shall hear from the critters to-night, after we think it is about time to go to sleep."

"But can't something be done for Don Ramon's party? I will follow Juanita into the camp of the Apaches! I will have her again, if the villains haven't—if they haven't killed her," cried Hal, almost beside himself, and with a shudder as he mentioned the possible fate of the unfortunate girl.

"Keep cool, Hal. It is by no means certain that the party attacked was Don Ramon's, though we ought to assist them if we can, whoever they are."

"I am as sure as I can be that it was Don Ramon's party; and they may be all killed before this time; or, if not, they will be disposed of soon, unless we do something for them."

"Don't get so excited that you can't do anything, Hal," interposed Ned.

"Ef we go that boy ought not to go with us," added Ben, bestowing a look of compassion upon the lover. "He's a clean-gone lunatic, and he ain't no more fit to fight Injens in that sitevation than he is to ketch chickens when his head's shot off."

"You are getting along altogether too fast in your conclusions, Hal. I have told you what I saw through my glass; and that was only a very little. I did not see much of the fight; and for aught I know

Don Ramon may have beaten off the Indians, and recovered his daughter. He is a very rich man, and he knows the perils of this country. It is probable that he had a sufficient escort, composed of men in whom he had confidence."

"Mexicans!" exclaimed Hal, in utter disgust. "I would give more for Ben Cavendish than I would for a hundred of them!"

Possibly this was a stroke of policy to conciliate the Kentuckian, who had spoken of him as a lunatic, and unfit to engage in any expedition for the assistance of the travellers on the flat.

"I don't reckon the gal's killed, Sonny," continued Ben, quietly. "Perhaps by this time, if they really taken her, she wishes she hed been."

"You will drive me mad!" exclaimed Hal, in the approved fashion of young men in his condition. "I must go and look for Juanita! I will go if I have to go alone!"

"Just as soon as your horses get a bite, Hal, I shall send out a party to see what had become of the train that was attacked."

"The horses haven't been worked hard to-day. They haven't been ridden more than ten miles since we saddled them this morning," protested Hal, with terrible earnestness; and I have no doubt he would have rushed into the first band of Indians that came in his way, if we permitted him to do so; and I was not sure that we should not be under the necessity of restraining him by force.

"'Tain't no time to do nothin' now, my little chicken," said Ben, with apparent indifference. "I don't know but I'd take a contrack to git back that gal, if she's been tooke, as you say; but things must be handled right, or 'tain't no use. I reckon if you go to work, Sonny, as you talk, the Injens will kill the gal jest to spite you. Cold steel cuts best; and don't git heated, little chicken."

We quieted Hal after a while, but it was only with the express promise that a party should be sent out that afternoon to ascertain what had become of Don Ramon and Juanita, if they proved to have been the persons attacked. The suggestion made by Ben Cavendish that he might not be permitted to join the party to visit the flat, probably had more influence with him than anything else.

With such parties as ours, it is not the custom to retain the remains of the dead in camp longer than is necessary. More or less of these rude hunters are superstitious, and the presence of a corpse had a strange influence upon them. Besides, we could not know that we should not be compelled to change our camping-ground within a few hours, and to do so without much notice. Our present position was so strong I could not believe that such necessity would arise on our own account, but I thought it advisable to place the remains of poor Jerry in their last resting-place on earth.

Though we might not be obliged to move our quarters on our own account, if the party attacked

on the flat was really Don Ramon, it might be desirable to change our position in order to render more efficient assistance to him. With the two twelve-pounders we could make it terribly hot for the Apaches. Possibly the sound of the guns would frighten them off, for probably the most of them had never heard the report of a cannon.

I had given direction for the preparation of Jerry's body for burial. It was little that we could do in this way; but we did all that the circumstances would permit. A grave had been dug on the summit of the hill, behind a clump of trees, so that the Apaches, if any were near, could not see what we were doing.

We bore the remains of our friend to this place of sepulture. All the hunters reverently uncovered as they laid the body by the grave. I read the burial service in a low tone, and the men then lowered the cold form into its last resting-place. Two of the hunters kept guard within sight of the party, in order to warn us of the approach of the enemy; but none interrupted the mournful ceremony.

In civilized communities, care is taken to mark the grave of the departed, even if no more than the mound of turf is raised; but it was different with us, with a deadly foe near us. We took every care to remove anything which would indicate that a human being had been buried in this spot. Even the grave was not sacred from the polluting touch of the Apaches. We smoothed over the ground, and then piled rocks carelessly upon the grave; and when we



returned to the camp there was nothing to show that the hill was a cemetery.

When this sad service was over, I had a long talk with Ben in regard to what was to be done for the party below. We had now only twelve hunters, and eight vaqueros upon whom we could depend for any service in the field. It was not prudent to go down upon the flat with less than half of this number.

"Ben, if we could get over on Castle Hill we could hold our own against all the Indians in the territory."

I could not get rid of this idea, and I hoped that some way would be found by which our camp might be removed to this strong position. I had walked along the cañon at least twenty times, trying to find a practicable approach to the coveted natural fortress.

"I have looked that place over before; and I reckon we kin git over thar somehow," replied Ben, casting his eyes over the cañon.

"Can you point out any way to do it?"

"That caravel is terrible heavy," he added.

"It is not so heavy as a wagon of that size would be. Of course we should unload it before we attempted to get it over; and we could roll the guns over on their carriages."

"I suppose you hain't got more'n one axe; leastwise I hain't seen but one."

"We have at least three sharp axes, for I thought it likely we might have to do some work with them in looking up the mine."

"Three axes!" exclaimed Ben. "Then we could build a bridge over the Gila. I reckon there ain't no diffikilty about it. All we want is the timber; and I reckon there is all we want."

"There are two trees on the bank of the cañon that are tall enough to reach across the chasm."

"I seen 'em; but I don't reckon you'd better cut 'em down. We have hosses enough to haul the sticks; but we want them trees whar they be."

Sile Carter was a down-easter, and wood-chopping was the principal part of his early education. I called him in, and told him what I intended to do. He was delighted with the plan to make our camp on Castle Hill. We had three ordinary axes and a broad-axe. Sile got these out, and found several of the hunters who had seen some service as woodmen.

Sile was to begin at once on the work of getting out the logs for the bridge over the cañon. I directed him to keep a guard posted that could see every approach to the position. Buck Sykes was appointed chief of artillery, and all the men who had seen service in this arm were to remain.

Ben Cavendish was to conduct the party on the flats. I decided to go with him, for if Don Ramon was really one of the number, I wanted to see him as soon as any one. It would not have been possible to prevent Hal and Ned from joining the active party. Each of the six hunters was provided with a Sharpe's rifle, in addition to his regular weapon. We were all ready for a start.

CHAPTER XXVI.

COMPOSITION OF THE TWO FORCES. — DOWN THE HILL. —
WHERE THE ENEMY WERE. — SCOUTS WANTED. — THE
KENTUCKIAN'S SELECTION. — PRIVATE INSTRUCTIONS. —
THE ROUTE OF THE SCOUTS. — ALONG THE TRAIL BY THE
RIVER. — THE WAGON TRACK. — A CURIOUS HALT. —
READY FOR ACTION. — BEN'S SHOT. — A DIABOLICAL
YELL.

WE served out six Sharpe's rifles to Sile's men ;
and with the two guns in position to blow the
Apaches out of existence in squads if they made an
attack, I left with the feeling that the camp was safe,
and in good hands.

Our six hunters and four vaqueros were all
mounted ; and all supplied with provisions for three
days. With what game we were likely to shoot, we
could subsist for a week without any hardship. A
couple of pack-horses were to carry what utensils and
extra supplies we needed.

Hal was extremely impatient, though he did his
best to control himself. He was thinking of Juanita
all the time, and he would not admit the possibility
that the lady carried off by the Indians could have
been any other lady. But we all saw that he was

greatly distressed, and we did not tease him, as many of the party had done before.

We rode out across the ford, and down the steep hill, which, with many windings, led to the flat. Nature seemed to have made a succession of small hills, so graded in height as to render the passage from the plain to the hills above practicable. So far as I knew there was not another place where the summit of the plateau could be reached within thirty miles. Probably the Indians had some way of coming down and going up; if they had, it must have been by the way of some of the numerous cañons which we saw in the side of the cliff.

I did not believe that a passage could be effected with horses. As I had seen some of the Apaches that attacked the party of travellers mounted, I concluded that the horses they used had been those stolen from Major Galloupe. My impression is that the plateau, extending for over thirty miles, was only a shelf on the side of the range of mountains to be seen farther to the southward and westward. It seemed impossible that the flat could be reached with horses from the other side.

There were Apaches on the flat and on the plateau; but I was satisfied that there was no means of ready communication between the two bodies. In this opinion Ben Cavendish coincided with me. It was necessary to know this in order to make our plans for action. Our expedition consisted of only ten men; and as I had seen two separate parties of the

Indians on the flat, it was plain enough that the enemy had at least five men to our one.

We descended the succession of hills and reached the flat. We moved first to the point where we had seen the band from the projecting bluff. We scouted the vicinity very thoroughly without finding any signs of the enemy. They had apparently abandoned the idea of ascending the slope down which we had come, if that had been their intention. I have no doubt they had examined our location, and had concluded that we were in a bad position for them.

"'Taint no use to ride over this flat looking for Apaches," said Ben, after we had assured ourselves that there were no Indians in the immediate vicinity of our camp on the hill. "We mought knock about here for seven year without seeing one on 'em."

"You have the command of this party, Ben, and you shall manage the hunt as you think best."

"The critters is hid in some of these clumps of trees, or in the holes in the side of the bluff. Them Injens is smarter than a Kaintucky coon, and tain't no use to try to do nothin' with 'em ef you don't do it in their way. They lead you one way, and pitch into you some other way. Now I reckon we must play that dodge on 'em ourselves," continued Ben, as we gathered around him, sheltered from observation by a clump of bushes.

"We are all ready to do just what you say, Ben."

"I know you be, but I want to have you all git an idea of what's to be done. I want the two spryest

fellers in the squad," replied Ben, looking over all the party. He did not consider me as coming under that head, and he did not waste any time in thinking whether or not to send me as one of the two.

I suggested Jacob Jäger as the smartest man physically in the expedition, and the Kentuckian selected him the first.

"I dinks Ned is the man to go mit me," said Jacob, proud to be the first chosen.

"Right you are, Jake; Ned is the 'tother," added Ben.

"Don't you think I had better be one of them," added Hal, nervously.

"I reckon you ain't the one for jest this work. I mought have something for you a little later on. I want you with me, Sonny," replied Ben. "These two are for special duty."

Ben took Jake and Ned aside, and talked to them for a considerable time, and he did not care to have any of us hear what he said. The two scouts were to proceed on foot, their horses to be led with the main body. Each of them had a Sharpe's rifle and his usual gun, besides a revolver. Each of them could fire sixteen shots without stopping to load. The rifles were slung over their shoulders, and the gun was carried in the hand, while the revolver was in the belt.

The scouts, or whatever they were, started on the perilous duty. All I knew then was that they were to move to the eastward, keeping as close to the cliff

as the condition of the country would permit. The horse-party, in which I remained, followed the trail by which we had reached the ford in the forenoon. As we rode along, Ben gave me the details of the strategy he had adopted. It appeared that our party were the decoys to lure the Indians from their hiding-places.

What we called the flat, along which we had been riding for a week, was from half a mile to a mile wide. There was every variety of country within a mile of us — swamps, woodlands, cliffs, caves, and cañons, the rushing river, and many tributary streams, that came down from the mountains through the chasms in the wall of rock on our left. It was early in the season, and the streams were full, and I doubted if the cañons were passable on account of the quantity of water.

We rode till we came to the main trail by the river, from which we had turned off to ascend the hills. Here we halted to enable the scouts to keep within operating distance of us. They were creeping stealthily along, crossing streams where there was not a ford smoothed out for them by the passage of teams, and climbing the rocks at the foot of the bluff.

We passed the clump of trees behind which most of the fight between the travellers and the Indians had occurred. So far we saw no signs of Indians or white men. We found the tracks of a wagon which did not correspond with that of the caravel or the

other vehicle in our possession. We halted at this place to examine the trail.

"See hyer," said Ben, in his stolid manner.

"What is it?"

"You kin see that the wagin turned about here, and the track leads t'other way. I reckon the party went back to look for the gal," said Ben.

"Don Ramon wouldn't leave when his daughter was in the hands of the Apaches," added Hal, struggling to restrain his impetuous nature.

"I reckon that's so. Ef we foller this wagin track, we shall find the party that fit the Injens, whether it was Don What-you-call-him, or some other don," replied Ben, as he moved forward again. "I reckon we've got at sunthin, and whar thar's a beginning tain't unlikely thar's an end somewhar."

We were behind the trees, as seen from the bluff, and the ground was badly cut up by the movements of horses, but the wagon had passed after the stirring up of the earth.

"That looks well, Ben. The party were not all killed or captured, for there were enough of them left with heads on their shoulders to bring up the wagon."

"That's jest so, jedge. Ef the Indians took that wagin they couldn't haul it across the flat about here. We shall come to it, if we heve to foller down to the Salinas," replied Ben, who was happy in the belief that his plan was working well, though I could not help feeling a great deal of anxiety about Ned Brown.

We had reached a point where we could see about a mile ahead down the trail by the river's side. No wagon, or any indication of the travellers was to be seen. It was not more than two miles back to the spot where we had pitched our camp the night before. The vicinity of Castle Hill seemed to be a favorite resort for the Apaches, for Major Galloupe had lost his horses in this region. It was certainly adapted to the operations of such a foe.

We proceeded another mile, and then Ben ordered a second halt, which seemed to be very unnecessary, for we could see the trail of the particular wagon we were following. But Ben kept up a tremendous thinking all the time, and I did not venture to question his proceedings.

"Git down off your horses," said he. "But I reckon you'd better be ready to git up again quicker'n chain lightnin' ever slid down a crab-apple tree."

"What's to be done now, Ben?"

"I reckon we're g'on' to git a brush in less'n fo' minutes and a half. We hain' got no time to talk about it, nuther."

"I don't see anything that looks like the enemy, Ben."

"Keep your peepers peeled, and you'll see 'em afo' your har gits any grayer. Git your hosses in atween you and the bluff."

It seemed to me that this was rather an odd proceeding if an immediate attack was expected. Instead of putting ourselves into a condition to meet an on-

slaught, such as the Apaches make, we were likely to be caught standing on the ground.

"Now, look kinder keerless. Don't look over to the bluff, 'cept through one corner of the nigh eye," said Ben, as unmoved as though he were arranging the figures for a wax show.

I gathered from this order that we were to look as though we didn't expect an attack, and I was very skeptical about any being made, for I could neither see nor hear anything that indicated the approach of the Indians.

"Now shift your seven-shooter rifles over in front of you, whar you can git at 'em when you want 'em."

We obeyed this order, but I wondered what the Kentuckian had seen which induced him to make this kind of preparation. But I had never known Ben to get up a scare for nothing, and generally he seemed to be too reckless. He said little, but he always appeared to know what was going on within a mile of him.

Every man of the party arranged his extra rifle so that it would be available at an instant's warning. The leader did all that he directed the rest of us to do. Suddenly the Kentuckian levelled his long rifle across his saddle and fired.

The next instant the most diabolical yell I ever heard sounded within a few rods of us.

CHAPTER XXVII.

“KINDER KEERLESS.” — MOUNTING IN A HURRY. — THE FALLEN RIDER. — THE ONSLAUGHT OF THE SAVAGES. — A VOLLEY OF ARROWS AND BULLETS. — NOISE AND VICTORY. — THE RIDERLESS STEED. — ENOUGH OF IT. — APACHE HORSEMANSHIP. — BEN’S STRANGE MOVEMENT. — THE RETREAT. — THE LITTLE GROVE. — THE KENTUCKIAN’S TACTICS. — EFFECTIVE SHOTS. — A SPIRITED CHASE. — ANOTHER HORSE WITHOUT A RIDER. — INTO THE MORASS.

THE Apaches’ yell was familiar enough to me ; but they are more apt to attack without any yell than with one. Doubtless they supposed we were unprepared for them, as the Kentuckian intended they should think. Ben had required us to face our horses to the east, and stand behind them.

As our leader explained this afterwards, it was not only to make us look “kinder keerless,” but also that the horses might serve as so many breastworks if the foe should open with a volley of ball or arrows, as they generally did in such an onslaught.

“Git on your hosses,” said Ben, in his easy and careless manner, when he had fired his long rifle.

We sprang into our saddles at a bound ; and Ben had placed the horses in position so that it could be done in an instant, and without turning the animals.

Breaking from one of a continuous succession of patches of trees and bushes extending across the flat, I saw a band of Apaches, about half of whom were mounted. This is what I saw as soon as I was in my saddle, and had a chance to look in the direction from which the yell came.

Ben had levelled his rifle across his saddle before the yell announced the coming of the enemy. The headmost man of the band, who was mounted on a fine horse, was in the act of springing up into the air when I glanced in that direction. It was his death-struggle, for he tumbled into the midst of his followers like a clod or a rock. He could not have known what hurt him.

His companions rode over him, for they could not check their steeds in season to avoid doing so. The horse of the fallen rider dashed forward. The savage yell had frightened him, but he was borne on by the animals behind him. Relieved of his burden, he began to make the most frantic leaps, galloping madly towards our party.

"Fire away! You needn't wait no longer," said Ben, as he brought his seven-shooter to his shoulder, and discharged it.

Of course the men on horses outstripped the ones on foot, though the latter ran with all their might. Another dropped when the Kentuckian fired the second time. Still the fiends yelled as though they thought that mere noise would win the victory for them.

By this time we heard the report of three or four guns, and a flight of arrows passed over our heads. Not one of us was hit, though I heard a bullet whistle uncomfortably near my head. Firing on horseback evidently was not the forte of the Apaches. I discharged one barrel of my gun, but several of our party fired by this time, and I could not tell what execution I had done. Four of the Indians slipped out of their saddles, and dropped upon the ground.

The steed of the leader dashed in close to us, and the horses of the others who had fallen took the same direction. They all ran towards the river, and when that headed them off they returned to the trail by a circuitous course, and continued to run up the stream. Five horses had thus left their burdens behind them.

Thus early in the onslaught, and before they had come within a hundred feet of us, the Apaches seemed to have had enough of this unequal warfare. We should surely have brought down the rest of them if they had continued on their course. As near as I could make the count, there were thirty of the foe. Seven more remained on their horses, but they sheered off to the west.

Then the Apache horsemen exhibited some of their peculiar equestrianism. They all lay over on the side of their animals, so that they were concealed, except one leg, from us. In this position they appeared to be circling around us. The few who had guns fired across the backs of their horses.

"Don't you mind them jest yit," said Ben, as he directed his fire to the Indians on foot.

We obeyed the order, and several of the footmen dropped to the earth either killed or disabled by wounds. Probably more of them were hit than was indicated in this manner. But they soon had all they wanted of this sort of thing. They halted, and then broke for the nearest clump of trees.

"Don't you mind them no more jest yit," repeated Ben. "Foller me."

The Kentuckian suddenly wheeled his horse, and dashed off at the top of Giant's speed up the trail. It looked very much like running away from a beaten foe, though no one can know when an Apache horde is beaten while there is life left in them, or in what manner or direction they will next demonstrate. But as the case stood at the present time no one thought of questioning the conduct of the Kentuckian. We regarded him as a marvellous man.

We followed Ben up the trail in the direction the five horses had taken. We ran our horses as though we meant to get out of the way of the foe, but I did not think this was what Ben was driving at. The mounted Apaches seemed to be as much astonished at these tactics as we were. They came to a halt and then, apparently after a hurried conversation, dashed up the trail after us. Their action excited no comment on the part of Ben Cavendish. Everything seemed to pass as a matter of course with him.

The horses ridden by the Indians, I noticed, had

not taken kindly to their specialty in horsemanship. They did not seem to comprehend their style of riding on the flank instead of on the back. This was an additional evidence that they had been recently stolen, and had not been trained to this sort of thing. They were not accustomed to the yell of the Indians, but the terror of the animals, and their conduct when their riders hung on one side, were all to our advantage.

"Where are we going now, judge?" asked Hal, impatiently, when he came up with me in our flight up the river.

"I don't know, my boy. Ben Cavendish knows what he is about, and he has his own way for conducting our operations."

"But we are running away from a handful of Apaches when we could easily have shot the whole of them," added Hal, no more able to comprehend the Kentuckian's tactics than I was, and less willing to submit to them without a murmur.

"Obey your orders, Hal, and ask no questions. No criticisms of any kind until we have finished the affair."

Hal said no more, but I doubt if he was any better satisfied than before with what we were doing just then. I could not catch Ben, if I tried, though when he found he was running away from us, as well as the Apaches, he reined in Giant, and permitted the rest of us to come within a reasonable distance of him.

We were approaching the little grove behind which

the attack on the travellers had taken place. Ben slackened his speed until we came within twenty feet of him. A bend in the river, and consequently in the trail we were following, brought us to a point where the enemy could not see us. Ben suddenly wheeled his steed when we reached the upper side of the little grove, and dashed in behind it. Here he came to a halt. We followed his example, and gathered around him.

"Now, shet up, every one of you!" said Ben, and there was something like a smile on his bronzed face, the first appearance of the kind I had seen while he was sober. "Don't open your mouth wide enough for a mosquito to crawl in, but keep your ears open. We've got three minutes and a half to spare. Be load'n up."

Ben proceeded to load his long rifle, and we renewed the charges in our weapons, including the Sharpe's rifles. Not one of us spoke a word after the warning we had received, and we wondered what was to come next.

"Now fix yourselves like a par o' stairs in a house, for I reckon some on you hes lived in housen. Keep up close to the trees as you kin, and see the trail outside of the man next to you. Hyer I am first, jedge next. Sonny, take the next place, and then Linn. Then four Greasers, fix your carcasses in the same way."

Ben talked fast for him, but by the time he had indicated what he meant, we were in the positions

pointed out to us, or in echelon, on the verge of the grove, the line of which was about an inclination of forty-five degrees with the course of the great trail by the river.

"There ain't but seven of them critters left on hoss-back. They are comin up Injen fashion. The fust one is mine, the second is the judge's man, and Sonny shall pop at the third. The fou'th is your'n, Linn Hoover," continued Ben. "Now fix yourselves so that you won't blow off the head of the next man befo' you."

We understood him perfectly now, and we revised our positions, so that we could see the trail, and shoot clear of the man next to us. Ben said no more, and we obeyed our orders literally and in fact, for we did not open our mouths. The horses panted, and the sweat rolled off their sides; but they were content to stand quietly.

Presently we heard the clatter of horses' feet on the other side of the wood. We could discern the guttural speech of the Indians, as they encouraged each other and urged forward their foaming steeds. In what was coming, each of us was to be responsible for his shot. We all had our guns ready, for we were to shoot the game on the wing, as it were.

We heard the enemy as they rushed on to destruction. Without any other demonstration, up went Ben's long rifle, and he fired. As usual, he seemed to give no care to his aim; but the foremost Indian slid off his horse and rolled on the ground. It was my turn next, and I fired at about the same instant

Ben did. My man slid part way off his steed. He was not killed, but he was wounded. Hal fired and missed his mark. Linn Hoover unhorsed his man. Mine clung to his animal but a moment longer, and then slid off. The four riders in the rear did not come into the view of the Greasers, but wheeled their horses and retreated the way they came.

The three horses which had lost their riders continued on their course, improving their speed as their burden was cast off. Thus it happened that eight of the twelve horses that had come out of the bushes a short time before were going on their own hook up the trail.

The instant the Indians in the rear wheeled their horses, Ben turned Giant in the same direction, and set out in pursuit. We followed him without stopping to ascertain the condition of the Apaches who had fallen. We could not keep up with the Kentuckian, but we had the opportunity of watching his movements. As he rode he brought his short repeating rifle to his shoulder and fired. Another Indian dropped from his horse; but Ben did not relax his speed.

The riderless horse dashed on, and we rode over the fallen savage. He did not move, and I concluded that the Kentucky rifleman put the ball through his head. When we came to a kind of morass the rest of the Apaches reined in a little, dropped from their steeds and disappeared in the swamp.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FLIGHT RATHER THAN DEATH. — THE END OF THE HUNT. — BEN RECONNOITRES THE TRAIL. — BEN GIVES MORE STRANGE ORDERS. — TAKING THE BACK TRACK. — THE KENTUCKIAN'S EXPLANATION. — SOME REMARKS ABOUT BOYS. — LOOKING OUT FOR THE SCOUTS. — INDIAN-CRAFT AND WOOD-CRAFT. — THE MOVING OF THE BUSHES. — CALLING OUT THE APACHES. — BEN SUDDENLY ENDS THE EXPLANATION FOR THE TIME. — FURIOUS SPEED. — THE HAT IN THE AIR. — A JUBILANT SALUTATION. — WHAT WE FOUND IN THE GROVE.

THE three living Apaches of the dozen who had made the onslaught on horseback were wiser than the majority of their people. Ben Cavendish would certainly have brought them all down before they could reach the point where they first appeared, for he had six more cartridges in his short rifle. They had abandoned their steeds to save their own lives.

The Apaches had ridden their horses as near the morass as it was possible to make them go; and it would have been folly to attempt to follow them, for the ground was not practicable for animals. The abandoned horses wheeled about and dashed off in the direction taken by the others. If they were

stolen horses, as I had no doubt they were, they had come from this way, and it was natural for them to go in a trail in which they had passed before.

"That hunt's up," said Ben. "We hain't got nothing more to do jest here. I reckon them foot critters won't huff it up this way. But 'twon't do no harm to see jest what they're a doin' on."

With this remark, Ben rode slowly down the trail until we came to the point where we could see as far as we had been that day. No Indians could be seen, and I supposed Ben would follow the main trail down to a point where we could see if Don Ramon and his party were in sight.

Instead of doing this, he ordered us and led the way in the direction of Castle Hill. I was not particularly pleased with the idea of going down the trail after dark, for that would give the Apaches an advantage over us. I spoke to the Kentuckian in regard to the matter.

"If you look out for Don Ramon, how kin we look out for our scouts, jedge? We are bound to stand by our scouts fust and every time."

"All right, Ben; I didn't know what you were driving at."

"If them scouts has anything to say, or if they git into any scrape, we ought to be within supportin' distance of 'em. I reckon we kerried out our part of the play; and if that gal is anywhar about hyer we'll heve her, or thar ain't no snakes in Virginy."

"You took the scouts one side when you told

them what to do, and we didn't hear what you said to them."

"And that accounts for't, jedge. I sent them fellers that way to keep a lookout for the gal. I don't know as it's Sonny's gal; but it don't make no difference. If them Injens got a white woman and kerried her off, it don't make no odds to me whose darter or whose mother she is; ef I kin git her out of the hands of them critters I'm gwine to do it, or bust sunthin'," said Ben, decidedly.

"But I should like to know whether Don Ramon is really in this part of the country, and I suppose we can't travel down the trail in the night."

"Why not, jedge?" asked Ben, looking me in the face as though he was rather puzzled by my remark.

"Because it is harder to fight the Apaches in the night than in the daylight."

"That depends on sarcumstances, jedge. They allus work in the night when they're gwine to clean out a camp; but out on the trail hyer we are jest as good as they be. They kin't see no better than we kin in the night; and two blind men ain't no better off in the daytime than they be in the night."

"Did you know that party of Apaches were coming out after us, Ben?"

"I expected 'em, jedge."

"You acted just as though they had sent you word that they were going to attack us, and as though they had given you the exact time when, and the place where, they intended to do it."

"I reckon they didn't do nothin o' the sort, jedge," replied Ben, shaking his head, as he evidently put a literal construction on what I said.

"You halted the party, and arranged everything to suit yourself. When you had things fixed to suit you, the Apaches came out, and you shot down the first one that showed his head."

"Thar ain't no witchery about it, jedge."

"I thought there was."

"Not a mite. When I sent them scouts down by the bluff, I reckoned them Indians was somewhar in that way. I reckoned they mought have a camp in that quarter. I did some thinkin' over this business. I don't want to tire you out tellin' what I was thinkin on, for folks don't gen'ally allus care what a backwoodsman like me hes got in his head."

"I should be very glad to know what you were thinking about, Ben. I am sure it would be useful to me; and I hope Hal will hear it."

"I should like to know all about it," added Hal, who was riding on the other side of the Kentuckian. "I feel as though I was learning something every hour in the day; and I always like to hear Ben explain things."

"That's the way to learn, Sonny. The trouble with boys is that they are older when they're about sixteen or eighteen than they ever git to be arter that. It takes 'em about twenty years to find out that they don't know nothin'."

"I have had that disease, Ben, and I am trying to get cured of it," said Hal, laughing.

In fact I had come to the conclusion that Hal was trying to mend his ways, for he was certainly more modest, less arrogant with the men, and more willing to listen to the counsels of others.

"The fust thing towards gittin' well is to find out that sunthin' ails you. You have got on fust rate to git so fur at your age," said Ben, in a tone that seemed to be equivalent to patting the boy on the head.

"You knew those Apaches were coming, Ben."

The Kentuckian sometimes forgot the story he was going to tell and branched off into another subject; and if I had not called him back to his topic we were as likely to get a dissertation on the education of boys as to receive an explanation of his movements since we left the Castle Hill camp.

"I don't say I know'd they was coming; I expected 'em, and they did come. That's the hull on't."

"But why did you expect them?"

"I'll tell you, jedge. I was dead sartain, jedge, that Don Ramon, or whosomdever that party might be that you seen attacked, didn't come up this way arter it was all over. If they didn't come this way they went t'other way. But they was bound to the eastward. If they got whipped to-day, they will try it again to-morrow, and them Injens will stay this side on 'em to cut 'em off when they do it."

"That is all clear enough. If Don Ramon is really at the head of the party he means to join me; and I

don't believe that he was whipped so that he is disabled for more than a day or two."

"I reckoned them Injens was somewhar 'twixt our camp and the spot whar they was hit," continued Ben. "My idee was to fotch 'em out to the trail, as fur as I could from their skulking-place. In this diggins you kin bet the critters will come out as soon as they see a chance to steal a hoss. They see our dozen hosses, and they wanted 'em."

"While we rid along the trail, I kept looking out for things, and I see sunthin' afore we got within half a mile of the place where we halted."

"What did you see, Ben?" asked Hal, intensely interested in the explanation.

"I only see the tops of the bushes movin', 'way over almost tew the bluff. That didn't mean nothin', for the wind might done it. But I kept a lookin', and lookin'; and kep' seein' sunthin' more. But I wan't dead sure on 'em till I seen a head, and then I came to a halt. I was afeerd they wouldn't come out, arter all; but they did, with the coaxin' we gin 'em. That's the hull on't."

"Then it is only by keeping your eyes open that you find out what is going on?"

"That's the only way. I ain't a witch, nor nothin' o' that sort. I don't know nothin' unless I see sunthin'."

"But what were Ned and Jake to ——"

Before I could finish the sentence, Ben gave the reins to Giant, stirring him up with the heels of his

boots, for none of our men wore spurs for the reason that I would not have a horse mean enough to need spurs, and I would not have allowed such a cruel usage if I had. The Kentuckian's steed bounded off like the wind, and we followed him with what speed we could command.

We had been riding leisurely up the trail during Ben's explanations, and by this time we had reached the place where the attack had been made on the travellers in the forenoon. I could see the projecting bluff from which I had witnessed it. A bend in the river would soon bring us in sight of Castle Hill.

I looked ahead, but I could not see anything to call for such haste as our leader had made; in fact I could see nothing to attract attention. When Ben reached the bend of the river, he shot off the trail, and rode towards the bluff.

I could not get near enough to him to ask a question, and the chances were, if I had, that he would not have answered it. But we followed him at the top of our speed, and Wildcat kept me ahead of the rest. I looked with all my eyes; and presently I was rewarded by the sight of a hat, hoisted up into the air on the muzzle of a rifle. The hat looked like Ned's.

The Kentuckian had seen the tops of the bushes bending in an unnatural manner, different from their movements under the influence of the wind. My Indian-craft, or wood-craft, had not included an education into things so fine as this. But after

this, I intended to make a study of this peculiar science.

A few minutes after I saw the hat, I discovered Ned running towards our party. He held his hat on the end of his gun, which was a signal among us that the owner of the hat belonged to the party, and we need not take the trouble to fire upon the bearer of it. Ned was alone. I wondered what had become of the honest German who was scouting with him.

"Hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Ned, as soon as I was near enough to hear him.

This jubilant salutation did not indicate that any disaster had happened to the scouts, though it did not explain the non-appearance of Jacob. I could not exactly commend Ned's prudence in leaving his companion alone while he was in a region swarming with Apaches. But as soon as Ned had done his shouting he turned and ran back as fast as he had approached.

Ben reined in his horse when it was apparent to him that there was no need of such terrific haste as he was making, and I caught up with him. We rode on a little farther, following the direction taken by Ned. When we came to a little grove, we found Juanita reclining on the ground, and Jacob standing by her as stiff as a soldier of the line.

CHAPTER XXIX.

JUANITA. — BEN INDULGES IN AN EXPLANATION. — I DO THE SAME. — CONSIDERATION FOR HAL. — A MEED OF JUST PRAISE. — A TALK WITH THE MAIDEN. — NED'S YARN DEFERRED TO A MORE CONVENIENT SEASON. — THE RETURN TO THE CAMP AS AN ESCORT. — SILE CARTER ON HAND. — AN APARTMENT FOR THE LADY. — SOMETHING ABOUT THE BRIDGE. — THE DEPARTURE ON THE NIGHT EXPEDITION. — ON THE FLAT.

THAR'S the gal, sure enough!" exclaimed Ben, and it would have taken a thousand years for the Kentuckian to exhaust a printer's stock of exclamation points.

"Juanita!" I added, almost in the same breath.

"Creation! She's as handsome as a pieter!" continued Ben; and I don't think I ever saw his face light up so much before.

I leaped from my horse, and sprang to the side of the maiden. She did not look as though she had suffered at all from her captivity in the hands of the Apaches; but doubtless she was reserved to gladden the eyes of some mighty chief. She was neatly dressed, but she looked pale and nervous, as well she might after such an experience.

"I am glad to see you, Juanita."

I took her by the hand, and she smiled as sweetly as though there was not an Apache within a hundred miles of her. I had got so far when Hal rushed from his horse to the spot. When he heard her name he did not wait to ask any questions. Hal was not as demonstrative as an old bachelor like me would have expected; but probably he was somewhat restrained in his gushing by the presence of the rest of the party, and dreaded the raillery of the camp in the future.

As their relations were known to her father, and appeared to be recognized by him, I retired from the scene, and the rest of the party had the grace to follow me without an order to do so. I left Hal holding the hand of the beautiful maiden, and I wished I was as young as he was. I am confident that, so far as I was concerned, if I had seen Juanita years before, I should not have been a bachelor, and should not have been wandering over the wilds of the great West.

"I reckon you've done a big thing," said Ben, mildly, as we walked out of the grove. This to Ned. "And you've helped him do it, Jake, or he has helped you do it, I don't know which."

"I don't do nodings but vot Ned tells me to do," replied Jacob, modestly.

"Then Sonny bossed the job?" added Ben.

"Sonny is der boss; und he have a head big enough as General Fremont's head, which was so big as keg of beer."

"Why don't you tell us about it, Ned?"

"It's rather a long story, and I thought you would like it better in the camp," replied Ned. "We did just what Ben Cavendish told us to do. We followed his directions to the letter, and everything worked just as he said it would."

"I reckon it don't allus happen so, Sonny," added Ben.

It had happened so every time so far as our experience extended.

"But I reckon we can't stop to hear the yarn now," continued the Kentuckian. "We've got the gal, and that's the best part of the yarn; and we know it without any tellin'. See hyer, jedge, findin' the gal proves that Hal was right. He hit the nail on the head that time, ef he don't allus do it. I reckon her father is somewhar on the river; and I rayther reckon we ought to go and look him up afore we hear any yarns. Sonny's story will keep; and we kin all hear it when we hain't got nothin' else to do, ef we ain't killed by them Apache critters; and then I reckon we shan't want to hear it."

"You are right every time, Ben; and we will inquire into Don Ramon's affairs."

"Judge," called Hal, running towards us from the grove, as I finished the remark, "Juanita is very anxious about her father."

"I should think she might be."

I followed him back into the grove attended by Ned and the Kentuckian. I judged that Juanita

was in no condition for "billing and cooing." She was a daughter before she was a maiden in love ; and I did not think she was old enough to "have it very bad," though she was evidently as much fascinated with Hal as he was with her. He was a very good-looking young fellow, and this was about the only point in which he was ahead of Ned.

"Where is my father, Señor Judge?" asked Juanita, as I came into her presence. She looked fearfully anxious, though the excitement of the occasion had brought some color to her cheeks.

She spoke good English, and she had greatly improved her pronunciation and the extent of her vocabulary since I had seen her last. She mixed in a few Spanish words, though my partial knowledge of that language enabled me to understand her without any repetitions.

"I don't know where he is, Juanita ; but as soon as possible we shall go down the trail, and ascertain what has become of him."

"You don't tell me that he was killed by the Indians !" she added, with a look of anguish.

"I don't tell you so ; and with all my soul I hope not. Now, if you will tell us what you know about the attack upon your party, we will do all we can for your father."

"*No conozco mucho* — I don't know much about the attack," she replied, with a tendency to talk in her native tongue. She seemed to fear that her want of knowledge might injure the chances of her father

being found. "I was caught by a big Indian, and carried off. The Indians were fighting our men. I am very sorry; but that is all I know about it."

"Never mind, Juanita. We will do the best we can to find your father. How many men had Don Ramon with him?"

"How many men? He had ten besides himself. He had — *diez y seis*; what do you call that?"

"Sixteen; all right, Juanita, I understand you."

"Sixteen horses, and one great wagon," she added.

"Were any of the men killed?"

"I don't know, Señor Judge. I was taken in the beginning, and I did not see anything," replied Juanita. "You will do something to save my father?"

The poor girl was as ignorant of what had transpired as I was; and very likely I had seen more of the affair than she had. I then told her that she had better go to our camp, and that I would start a party immediately to ascertain what had become of her father. She wanted to go with us, but I reasoned her out of this idea. We were now not far from the camp; but if I sent her with Hal alone, as I at first thought of doing, the Apaches might be in that region, and capture the young couple.

I decided that the whole of our men should escort them to the camp. We soon reached the ford. We could not permit the maiden to walk, and Hal proposed to take her on his horse with him; but I did not think he was strong enough to hold her, and I had not entire confidence in him in the event of a sudden

attack. The discussion ended in my taking her on my own horse, which, next to Giant, was the most powerful in our collection.

Sile Carter was on the alert at our arrival. He took all proper precautions before allowing us to approach the hill on which the camp was located, for it was beginning to be too dark to see clearly. When I rode in with Juanita in my arms, he called for three cheers from his men. He had met the young lady, and he gave her a very pleasant welcome.

"We have not come to stay, Sile, though we shall leave the lady in your charge. You must make a room for her in one of the wagons and keep a special guard over her."

"I cal'late there is plenty of room in the ark, but it smells pooty strong of bacon," replied Sile. "But mebbe she won't keer for that."

"I think she can stand it for one night; and if she is to remain with us, we will make a better place for her. How do you get along with the bridge timber?"

"Fust rate. I've found the place to build the bridge, and the stuff to build it with. I cal'late we can git over there in a couple of days. I've studied up a plan to build that bridge, and it can be done in short order."

"I am glad to hear it, Sile. Don't forget that Juanita must have a guard all night if we don't get back before morning."

"Don't be skeered, jedge. I shall sleep standin'

up to-night. If anybody gits her out of this ranch to-night he'll have to take her straight up in the air. I cal'late she's an angel, and mebbe she's got wings."

Sile wanted to tell me something more about the bridge over the cañon; but I could not stay to hear him out. He was an enthusiast in whatever he undertook, and I was confident that the bridge would be built, though perhaps not quite so soon as he predicted. Our party took their suppers while I was making arrangements with Sile for the comfort and safety of the Mexican maiden; and I ate my lunch as I attended to business.

I saw that Hal was inclined to remain with Juanita, but I did not think it was just the thing to humor him. He only hinted that he should like to stand guard over the caravel, in which the lady was to be accommodated. I suggested to him that he ought to be the first to inform her father, in case we found him that night, as I was confident we should, of the safety of his daughter. He said no more about staying with the señorita.

I was confident that Don Ramon would not leave the valley of the Gila without his daughter, and I had no doubt he was encamped farther down the trail. He seemed to have mistaken the locality of the Indians; but I was sure he would do all that could be done to recover the girl.

In spite of Ben Cavendish's assertions to the contrary, I felt a little skittish about operating on the flat in the night. No moon would aid us until very

late. If we did not fall into an Indian ambushade, I could see some difficulty in approaching the camp of Don Ramon, for we had no means of making ourselves known, and were in great danger of being mistaken for a gang of Apache marauders. I talked with Ned about this matter, and he went to the caravel and produced a box of Roman candles he had bought in San Diego, intending to use them on the Fourth of July.

One or two of these would light up the trail so that we could be seen by Don Ramon, and they would know that Indians were not provided with such playthings. I rode out of the camp by the side of the Kentuckian, who always took the lead, except when the greater danger was in the rear.

"Don't you think it is very strange the Apaches on the high ground have not attacked the camp, or at least shown themselves near it?"

"I don't reckon they want to show themselves till they git ready to make a hit. But they'll come soon enough, jedge," replied Ben. "You kin bet your pile they've seen us leave the camp; and very likely they will make a slash at it while we are gone."

When we reached the flat, I was rather surprised to see about a dozen horses quietly feeding near the trail.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE MASTERLESS HORSES. — STOLEN PROPERTY. — DOWN THE TRAIL. — THE FIRE BY THE RIVER. — A CAUTIOUS APPROACH. — THE SENTINEL. — LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT. — DON RAMON ABSENT. — THE TURN-OUT OF THE TRAVELLERS. — PETERSON. — AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE. — WHERE DON RAMON HAD GONE. — THE APACHE VILLAGE. — HAL TELLS THE NEWS. — CHEERS IN SPANISH.

WHAT horses are these, Ben?"

I might have known, but I didn't think. Events had succeeded each other so rapidly that I had forgotten in a later sensation the occurrences of a few hours before. It occurred to me at first that there must be a camp in the vicinity somewhere, and that the travellers had turned out their horses to get their suppers, though this was a very unusual thing to do in the midst of so many enemies.

"I reckon these be the hosses them Apaches was pitched off from," replied Ben. "They all legged it up this way."

"I understand it now. Probably these horses, or some of them, are the ones that were stampeded from the camp of Major Galloupe."

"Jest as like as not; but they ought to be taken care on. We hain't got no time to do it; and I reckon they will stay here till we get back."

We left them to the rich feed they found on the flat, hoping to find them on our return. We followed the trail, passing the points where eventful scenes had been enacted that day without seeing any Indians or any signs of Don Ramon's party. After we got by the place where the Apaches had attempted to surprise us, we kept a sharp lookout for the camp of the Mexican nabob. After a ride of a couple of miles we discovered what appeared to be a fire ahead, at the side of the trail, and quite near the river.

"I reckon that mought be Don Ramon's camp," said the Kentuckian.

"If it is any camp at all, it must be Don Ramon's. It can't be an Indian camp."

This was not so much an opinion of my own as a suggestion to call forth the opinion of my tall companion.

"Injens don't camp so near the trail. It would sp'ile their business."

We proceeded a short distance farther, and then we saw a man in the trail. He had a gun in his hand, and before we could get near enough to speak he fired. But the gun appeared to be discharged in the air; at any rate, none of our party were hit by a bullet.

"Don't you think we had better light up the country a little, Ben?"

"Light up the country? What on airth do you mean by that?" asked Ben, who knew nothing about the Roman candles in the possession of the boys.

"We can make it as light as day for a few seconds."

"How be you gwine to do it?" inquired Ben. "We hain't got no lightwood here, nor nothin' of the sort as I knows on."

"If you wish to have it done, you have only to say so, Ben."

"Well, let drive. I want to know what you're gwine to do," added Ben, whose curiosity was excited.

"Light one of them, Ned."

The man we had seen in the trail was retreating slowly before us. Possibly he was satisfied by this time that we were not Apaches, or we should not have taken things so easily in the immediate vicinity of a camp. Ned lighted the Roman candle, and in a moment its glare illuminated the scenery around us, and turned the night into day. But the effect upon the horses was rather exciting, for they seemed to be as ignorant of such fireworks as the Kentuckian.

"Creation!" said Ben, more in a tone of resignation than wonder, though he was evidently greatly astonished at the sudden change in the appearance of things around us. "That's a bigger thing than lightwood."

Giant was dancing like a maiden just come out, and the fizzing and popping caused all the animals to

spring as though they wished the thing was farther off. But our horses were not of the cow kind, and we expected them to show some life when anything unusual took place.

By the brilliant light I had an opportunity to survey the objects in the neighborhood. The first and most welcome thing I saw was a baggage-wagon near the fire. It was covered with white canvas, and I knew that Don Ramon provided a sleeping-place for his daughter in his wagon.

"Who goes there?" asked the man in the trail, who had come to a halt when the light assured him that we were not Apaches. He spoke in Spanish.

"Friends," I replied. "Is this Don Ramon's camp?"

"*Si, señor.*"

"Tell him his Buena Vista friends are here."

We continued to advance, and soon came up with the man. The candle had burned itself out, but it had done its work.

"Don Ramon is not at the camp now," replied the man.

"Not at the camp?"

I was greatly astonished and disappointed at this intelligence.

"Where is he?"

"He has gone in search of his daughter," answered the sentinel. "But our people are coming forward."

Eight or ten men were advancing up the trail and presently they joined us at the conference.

"Judge, I am right down glad to see you!" shouted the foremost of the party, as he rushed forward and grasped my hand. "We have been looking for you for the last ten days, and I wish we had found you before."

"Is that you, Peterson?" I could not quite make out who it was in the darkness, and I did not care to waste the small stock of Roman candles in the possession of the boys, for I thought they might render good service on some important occasion, as they had on the present.

Peterson was an American who had some business relations with Don Ramon, and had visited Buena Vista with my Mexican friend. In fact, he was Don Ramon's right-hand man, and I understood at once that he was in command of the party in the absence of his employer.

"I am Peterson; you ought to know the sound of my voice by this time. But, come; ride into our camp," added the right-hand man.

He walked by the side of my horse, and the rest of his party, with the exception of the sentinel, preceded us. They were all armed, and evidently expected a fight when they came out of the camp, called by the signal of the guard.

"We have been looking for you ever since we left the Coolrado river. We expected to find you there, for Don Ramon said he wrote that he would join you there, as we were unable to get through to Buena Vista in season to start with you. We had some

business in Hermosillo, in Sonora, and we came that way. We crossed the desert about twenty days ago," said Peterson. "Don Ramon was greatly distressed when he found you had left Fort Yuma, for he expected to wait a week for you there."

"I have received no letter at all from him. If I had I should have waited for him, if it had been a month, but I concluded that he had given up the trip, for I suppose you are having stormy times in Mexico, with your new emperor and with your two parties."

"Stormy enough, judge, but not so stormy as we have had this very day," added Peterson.

"As the Don had ten men with him, I did not think he would have any trouble in getting through, but you had a sharp fight this forenoon."

"Who told you Don Ramon had ten men, and that we had a hard fight? You could not have been near, or you would have come to help us."

"I saw the fight, or a part of it myself. But we were in a fight ourselves at the same time, and we lost one of our best men—old Jerry Benson, who was at Buena Vista when you were there."

"Poor Jerry! I am sorry for him. But you could not have told that Don Ramon had ten men from seeing part of it."

"I had that from one that was with you at the time. But the sentinel told me that Don Ramon is not here now, and I know he is not, or I should have seen him before this time."

"He is not here. If you know about the fight we had with the Apaches, you know perhaps that his daughter, Juanita, was captured by the Indians," added Peterson, with so much emotion that I wondered if he had not some of Hal's symptoms. But the right-hand man was full forty, and for aught I knew he had a wife in some other part of the country.

"I know all about Juanita. But where can Don Ramon have gone?"

"He has gone to look for his daughter."

"Gone to look for her! Where has he gone?"

"Over beyond the mountains, for in the midst of them, there is an Apache village, and Don Ramon is confident that his daughter has been conveyed there," added Peterson.

"I am sorry that he got that idea into his head, for Juanita was not conveyed to the village of the Apaches."

"You talk as though you knew something about it, judge," said my puzzled countryman from Mexico.

"I know all about it, Peterson; and she has not been carried to any Apache village, though I fancy that would have been done in a few hours more, if circumstances permitted her captors to convey her to their home, if they have any home."

"What do you mean, judge? What circumstances were there that would have prevented the Indians from taking the prisoner to their village?"

"The rather important circumstance that they have not the young lady to take to their village."

"Unfortunately they have her; and I think her father will find her there," protested Peterson.

"But I know that he will not find her there. Hal knows all about her, and he can tell you as much as I can."

This as we came to a halt at the camp, and I dismounted from my horse.

"Is Hal here? I shall be right glad to see him," said Peterson. "Hal is a great favorite with the Don, and I suppose you know that Juanita don't hate him as badly as she does Apache Indians."

Hal had heard about all that had been said, and he came forward to show himself. Peterson gave him a cordial greeting.

"What do you know of Juanita, Hal?" asked the right-hand man, as soon as they had passed between them the conventional salutations at meeting.

"We have her safe and sound in our camp at Castle Hill," answered Hal, telling the whole substance of the story without any preliminaries, as I wished him to tell it.

"Juanita! Is it possible that she has escaped from the Indians?" exclaimed Peterson. "Where is Castle Hill? I never heard of it before."

Hal told where Castle Hill was, and told all he knew about the recapture of the Mexican maiden. Peterson was delighted with the intelligence, which was communicated to the rest of Don Ramon's party, whereat they demonstrated with cheers the satisfaction they felt.

"It was Ned Brown that bossed the job," added Hal.

It was handsome of Hal to say this so soon, and I had high hopes of him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT. — THE INDIAN GUIDE. — BEN CAVENDISH'S OPINION. — A COINCIDENCE IN TIME. — THE MEXICAN GENTLEMAN IN GREAT PERIL. — WE DECIDE WHAT TO DO. — THE TRAIL. — ACROSS THE FLAT. — THE CAÑON. — A GLOOMY CHASM. — A DANGEROUS AND DIFFICULT ASCENT. — WOUNDED AND WORN-OUT. — A NEEDED REST AND SLEEP. — A LONG TRAMP. — THE APACHE VILLAGE. — THE INDIANS AND THEIR PRISONER.

I WAS terribly disappointed at the absence of Don Ramon, more because I was anxious to have him comforted with the knowledge that his daughter was safe and well than for any other reason. He was gone just at the time when the news came that would have rejoiced his heart more than any other event in the world.

Hal told his story, and Peterson wanted Ned to tell his story; but I interposed. I told the right-hand man that we could not wait till this long yarn was reeled off, for it might take an hour. I added that our camp might be attacked, and nothing but the peril of Don Ramon would have induced me to leave it for a single hour. If we could serve him further, we would stay a week, for I was sure that

our camp would be successfully defended by the men and the means we had left for that purpose.

"How many men went with Don Ramon to the Apache village?"

"Not a single one, except an Indian guide; and I have no faith in him," said Peterson, shaking his head with ominous doubts.

"An Injen guide," added Ben Cavendish. "Where did he find the Injen guide?"

By the light of the fire, I could see something like a sneer on the bronze face of the Kentuckian, which I interpreted as an expression of contempt at the want of skill and foresight on the part of the Mexican gentleman in trusting himself to the guidance of such a person.

"The guide came along the trail just about dark to-night," replied Peterson.

"Then it was arter our fight with the Apaches," added Ben, putting an enormous quid of tobacco into his cheek.

"I heard firing up the trail some time before he came here."

"I reckon it was one of the critters we fit into above hyer," said the Kentuckian. "And the don went off with the guide?"

"Only about an hour before you came," added Peterson, whose fears seemed to be excited by the comments of Ben Cavendish.

"Then I reckon we'd better be up and doin'," replied Ben, rising from the ground where we were

all seated in Indian fashion. "Do you know anything about this Indian village? Whar did they go?"

"The guide said it was just across the mountain, and they could get there before morning, and take time for three hours' sleep on the way."

"It looks bad, uncommon bad," added the Kentuckian, apparently talking to himself rather than to the party around him.

"Do you think Don Ramon is in danger, Mr. Cavendish?" asked Peterson, anxiously.

"Do I think he is in danger? I don't reckon he will have a skelp on his head by this time to-morrer. You can't trust no Apache no more'n you kin a rattlesnake. They bite when they gits a chance, whether it's friend or foe," said Ben, shaking his head all the time, as he was apt to do when he had a hard case on his mind. "It was queer that he should go with any Apache."

"I thought so myself; but Don Ramon was so anxious to obtain his daughter, or at least to see her, that he was willing to run any risk. But the Indian guide spoke Spanish, and talked very fairly."

"Did he?" sneered Ben. "I reckon he was a comeouter; thet he had quarrelled with his chief, and wanted to git revenge on him, or sunthin o' thet sort."

"Have you met this Indian guide, Mr. Cavendish?" asked Peterson, with no little excitement in his manner.

"Heve I seen him? Heven't I seen a hundred on

'em. Don't they all tell the same story?" flouted Ben. "I'll bet four cents agin a chaw tobacker they know'd the gal had got away from 'em afore he came here. Where was the camp you found the gal in, Sonny?" continued Ben, turning to Ned Brown.

"It was just at the foot of the bluff, on the bank of the stream that runs around Castle Hill, not far from the place where you fought the Apaches," replied Ned. "I heard your firing when we took Juanita out of the camp. A line drawn at right angles with ——"

"A line drawn to the moon, Sonny! Talk English, or give us the pigeon talk of the dons," interposed Ben, whose knowledge of geometry was probably very limited.

"Abreast of the point where we fought the Indians."

"That's what right angles means, is it, jedge? Then the critters know'd the gal was gone; and more'n that; they mean to git her agin. But rot my old timbers in the mud if they shall have her!"

"Do you know which way the Indian guide conducted Don Ramon, Peterson?"

"I do, judge; there's a trail leading over to the bluff. We found it this afternoon; and they left by that."

"This party is goin' arter the don," said Ben. "We may ketch him ef we don't lose the trail. We'll leave our hosses hyer; but fotch along all your shooters; and boys, heve them firelights with you,

for I reckon we may want them. They're a bigger thing than lightwood; but I don't know's you can git any lightwood this side of old Kaintuck."

I saw that Ben meant business, and I did not hesitate to follow anywhere that he would lead. He regarded the guide as treacherous and intending in some way to regain the daughter through the capture or influence of the father. The Greasers under Peterson took our horses, and in a few minutes more we were in the trail the right-hand man pointed out to us. We moved towards the bluff, and it was probable that it would take us to some cañon in the cliff where the high ground would be reached.

Nothing but the peril of my friend could have tempted me to engage in such a jaunt after so hard a day's work. I was tired, and so were the men. But Ben had not made so bad a case as he really believed the situation of Don Ramon to be. He was to be the victim of treachery; he had been enticed away from the camp after the discovery that Juanita had escaped.

As I have said before, I had been to an Apache village in this region, where I met Cochise and Mangus Colorado, two of the most noted, as well as the most cruel and bloodthirsty ruffians the world ever produced. Whether the village for which we were bound was the same one, I had no means of knowing, but I judged that it was.

As Ben predicted, and I believed we should, find the trail ended at a cañon in the cliff. Not one of us had ever been through the place, which would have

presented difficulties enough in the daytime ; and it was a thousandfold worse in the night. The water gushed out of the great chasm into the river which almost surrounded Castle Hill. All the light we could obtain was produced by occasionally lighting a match.

We had no difficulty in fording the stream, for the water was not over the top of our boots. We found a landing-place on the other side. We entered the mouth of the cañon. Lighting a match, we found a considerable brook, but there were dry rocks enough to afford us a footing. We found that the bottom of it was a gradual slope, but the ascent was exceedingly hazardous.

It would be difficult to describe the perils and the hardships we experienced in the passage of the cañon. It was more than equal to all the day's work we had done since we left our grassy hammocks in the morning. Whatever necessity there was for haste, hardly one of the party was in condition to go any farther without a rest when we reached the open ground above. Some of us had been severely lamed and bruised by the falls we had received in the darkness of the chasm.

Thoroughly exhausted we lay down on the ground, with no thought or fear of Indians or anything else. I went to sleep, for worn-out nature could do no more. I suppose most of my companions did the same, though I think Ben Cavendish did not. At any rate he called us when the moon rose.

We were somewhat refreshed by our rest, and we continued to follow the trail, which was very indistinct at times. But after the moon was well up we had little difficulty in keeping in it. I judged that this path was a constant thoroughfare for the Apaches. The great trail by the Gila was their stamping-ground for plunder and war upon the whites when they had any grievances to be revenged, as they generally did. They claimed all the territory by right of conquest, and the use of it by the whites, even to passing through it, was regarded as a trespass.

We trudged along on our weary way till daylight, though we were occasionally obliged to stop and rest. The trail led us to the southward. We crossed some high hills, which counted as mountains as seen from the plains below. As the sun was rising we halted for breakfast. The meal improved our strength, and we continued on our way till nearly noon.

"How far do you think we have come, Ben?"

I asked this question; and it was the first speech that had been heard for hours. The Kentuckian showed less signs of fatigue than the rest of the party, and he still kept his place at the head of the line.

"Nigh on to thirty mile, I should say," replied he. "But I reckon we haven't much further to go, judge. I don't think them boys can stand it much longer."

"They seem to bear it better than the vaqueros."

"Hyer we be," said Ben, as we came out of a little piece of woods such as we occasionally found, with the trail leading directly through it.

I looked ahead, and saw that we were approaching a long line of cliffs, similar to that on the other side.

"Thar's your Apache village," added the Kentuckian. "I reckon we'd better halt hyer, and take a look at the country ahead and all about us."

I did not see the village at first, but a second look revealed it to me. It was the one I had visited, though I had approached it before from the other side. Down in a valley, forming a flat like that by the Gila, were the lodges of the Indians. It was a beautiful region; in fact, a paradise upon earth.

"Lay down all of you!" said Ben, in a low voice; and we all dropped as though we had been shot.

For a minute I could not comprehend the meaning of this order. Coming out of another little grove perhaps a quarter of a mile from us, was a party of three Apaches. In front of them marched a man in civilized costume. I concluded at once that he was a white man, and that it was Don Ramon. How we had got ahead of the party I could not explain.

As they came from a different direction it was evident that they had not followed the same trail we had taken all the way. I recalled a place where we had been in doubt which of two paths to take. We had chosen one, and the Indians the other. As they came nearer we saw that the white man had his hands bound behind him.

CHAPTER XXXII.

SLAKING IT. — APPROACH OF THE PRISONER AND HIS CONDUCTORS. — BEN MAKES INTELLIGIBLE SIGNS. — THE FIRST SHOT. — ONE APACHE LESS. — A BAD SHOT. — WHAT HAL DID. — DON RAMON. — DAZED BY HIS SUFFERINGS. — THE AGONY OF THE FOND FATHER. — HAL DELIVERS HIS NEWS. — AN INCREDULOUS PARENT. — THE INDIAN GUIDE — DINNER. — ON THE MARCH AGAIN. — AN EXHAUSTED COMPANY.

SNAKE it back into the grove!" said Ben, in an impressive whisper.

This meant that we were to crawl on our stomachs, and we set about it. The Kentuckian told us to move at a snail's pace, and not to disturb any bush, which might attract the attention of the sharp-eyed Apaches. When we lay down there was underbrush enough to prevent the enemy from seeing us.

By the time we were within the grove the trio of Apaches were within twenty rods of us. They were evidently as weary as we were. Don Ramon dragged heavily along; and he seemed to have hardly the strength left to put one foot before the other. The party must have rested longer on the way even than we did; but they were hardly in better condition.

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Ben would not permit us to rise upon our feet, or lift our heads much above the ground. I was nearest to him, and saw him turn over upon his back, after bringing his breech-loader in front of him. I did the same, and with the same caution that he used. The others followed our example. Ben did not speak, but he looked at his command individually in the most expressive manner.

His looks and his gestures were quite as significant as words would have been at such a thrilling moment. He made signs to me as he drew his long rifle to the front of him. He pointed to himself and then at his rifle to intimate that he intended to fire upon the Apaches. Then he pointed to Hal, and went through the same pantomime, with an additional sign that he was to fire after my shot. But all the party were ready to fire.

I was not clear how we were to shoot at the conductors of Don Ramon while we lay on the ground; but Ben soon set all doubts at rest as to the manner of doing it. Raising his head and shoulders, he brought his long rifle to bear on the mark and fired. I was morally sure that one of the Apaches would fall; and Ben and Sile were the only men in the party that gave me the same assurance in their inevitable accuracy.

Ben fired almost as soon as the rifle was raised. I took the same position he had taken, and as I elevated my head, I saw the foremost of the three Indians sink upon the ground. He had not only been

hit, but he had been hit in a vital part. He never knew what hurt him.

It took me longer to get the range of the second Indian, for he was beginning to make a demonstration at the fall of his leader. I had the mortification of seeing that I had done the second in the file no harm. Hal fired next, and more promptly than I had done. His man fell, but I saw that he was not killed. I sprang to my feet as soon as the Kentuckian did so, and fired the other barrel of my gun at the man I had missed before. By this time he had pointed a heavy gun he carried in the direction of the grove. His left arm dropped, and the gun fell out of his arms. He had been wounded.

"I reckon you didn't hit him in the right place, jedge," said Ben, as he walked towards the spot where the first and third man had fallen.

"I am afraid my nerves are not very steady after the night tramp we have had."

I was ashamed of the bad shots I had made; and I compared myself with such marksmen as Ben and Sile; but I was an average shot. I followed the Kentuckian out into the open ground. Don Ramon had stepped a little out of the way, and he evidently comprehended that the attack had been made on the Apaches in his interest.

One of the enemy was shot dead; the second was writhing on the ground, and the minutes of his life were numbered; the other had been wounded in the left arm. But the last, with his right hand, had

drawn a wicked-looking knife from his belt, for he wore a belt around his nearly naked body. It did not appear that he intended to make an attack with this weapon, and only got it ready for defence.

I walked directly towards Don Ramon, leaving Ben to take care of the only remaining foe. My Mexican friend looked at me with astonishment, and did not appear to recognize me at first; but it was because he hardly looked at me long enough to see who I was. He said afterward that he thought the Indian guide — for he was the one who alone remained on his feet — meant to use the knife upon him. But Ben and the rest of the party soon placed themselves between the Indian and his victim, and then the gentleman looked at me more leisurely.

"I am glad to see you, Don Ramon; but sorry to find you in this condition."

"Judge! Is it possible?" exclaimed he, in good English, for he was a scholar as well as a gentleman.

I had taken out my knife, and, with the long blade opened, I rushed towards him. He looked at me with a feeling of alarm, as I judged from his expression.

"Let me cut those ropes from your arms. I see you cannot even shake hands with me."

Possibly he thought I had suddenly become his enemy, and intended to use the knife upon him in another way. I cut the strings that confined his hands behind him, and the first thing he did with them was to grasp both of my hands in his own. The poor gentleman actually shed tears as he did so,

for doubtless he realized that he had suddenly been redeemed from certain death at the hands of the Apaches.

"You are an angel from heaven, judge!" exclaimed Don Ramon, brushing the tears from his face.

"Hardly."

"You cannot know what it is to be saved until you have been through some of my sufferings, judge. I feel like a woman," said he, possibly ashamed of the tears he had been shedding.

"You are safe now, Don Ramon. Hal is here, and he shot one of the villains who were conducting you."

"Dear little Hal!" added the Mexican. "He is a brave boy."

I called Hal from the party near the Indians, and he promptly responded to my summons. Don Ramon embraced him, and said a great many handsome things to him.

"You have not seen Juanita lately?" said Hal, plainly to introduce the announcement he was on the point of making, and which had been reserved for him.

"Not since this time yesterday," replied the poor father, as he covered his face, and began to tremble with emotion.

"Cut it short, Hal."

It was too bad to allow the stricken father a single instant of unnecessary anguish; and I was afraid Hal would enlarge too much on the preliminaries.

"I saw her last evening," continued Hal.

"Juanita?" exclaimed Don Ramon, dropping the arm that covered his face, and gazing with all his being into the eyes of the boy.

"In a word, Don Ramon, she is safe and well, in the judge's camp," added Hal, coming to the point all in a heap.

"No! you are jesting with me. Juanita is in the Apache village we see in the valley," cried Don Ramon, unable to believe the intelligence so promptly conveyed to him.

"She is not there, and has not been there," replied Hal. "Every man in this party has seen her. She was taken out of the camp of the Apaches, near Castle Hill, and Ned was the boss of the job."

"Can it be possible?" demanded the father, beginning to look a little hopeful.

"What Hal says is true, every word of it, Don Ramon."

"If you say so, judge, I must believe it, for you would not trifle with a father's feelings. I can hardly believe it yet, though you do say it is true," answered the Mexican, rubbing his head as though he was dazed by the intelligence.

"We left her at our camp last evening to find you."

"Is she safe! Are you sure they would not be able to carry her off again?" asked the father, unable to realize the truth of the good news. "I would not trust her out of the sight of my own eyes, and she was stolen before my very face."

"She is in the care of Sile Carter, who will keep a guard over her night and day. It is impossible for all the Apaches in the territory to get her away from him, he is in such a strong position."

"The saints be praised! I was mad to bring her with me into this wild country. It is all my fault. But she was not safe at home."

"But you need not reproach yourself. She is safe; and she will be safe if you don't see her for a month."

After a while I succeeded in bringing Don Ramon to a more composed state of mind. He began to ask me a great many questions, all of which I insisted upon postponing to a more convenient season for answers. My friend walked with me over to the spot where the rest of the party were surrounding the dead and living Indians, for Hal's victim had ceased to writhe.

Ben had taken the knife from the hand of the guide, and tied his hands behind him. I introduced the Kentuckian to Don Ramon, and explained to the Mexican how deeply he was indebted to him for the safety of his daughter, and also of himself. Don Ramon expressed his gratitude in the warmest terms.

"Hyer ain't no place for we uns to stop," said Ben, breaking in upon the grateful father's speech. "We are in the thick of the Apaches, and I reckon they're thicker'n hornets in this quarter. Take the back track, and don't stop to chew on it."

We walked back into the grove, Ben driving the

guide before him. We could not release him, for he would bring a gang of Apaches down upon us, and we were in no condition for a fight with a large force of them. He would not shoot him as some of the men suggested. We soon found that Don Ramon was more exhausted than our own party. It did not look as though we should be able to march back to the camp that day. We sat down on the ground where a dense thicket covered us with its friendly leaves, and in a minute I think that half our men were asleep.

I soon ascertained that Don Ramon had not tasted food since the middle of the day before, and I supplied him liberally from my own haversack. When he had eaten heartily he began to be sleepy. All the men dined on this spot, after Ben had wakened the sleepers. We fed the guide, and released his arms, for he could not harm us now. The worst he could do was to run away; and he knew as well as we did that an escape would be a sufficient excuse for shooting him.

Ben would not permit us to tarry long in this dangerous proximity to the Apache village. After dinner we were all in better condition to go ahead. Five miles farther on we halted again. I mounted guard myself, and every other man, including the guide, went to sleep. I permitted them to sleep a couple of hours and then we resumed our journey.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

A BIVOUAC ON THE MOUNTAIN. — ANOTHER LONG TRAMP. — THE ENTRANCE TO THE CAÑON. — ANOTHER ROUTE. — AT THE FORD. — JUANITA. — SILE CARTER HARD AT WORK. — A MISSION DOWN THE TRAIL. — A COMPLACENT DOWN-EASTER. — THE STRAY HORSES. — A LAZY AFTERNOON. — DON RAMON'S FOLLOWERS. — NED BROWN'S NARRATIVE. — DON RAMON'S EXPLANATIONS. — THE KENTUCKIAN'S VIEWS. — BUILDING THE BRIDGE. — A FLYING LEAP.

AT sunset we had gained the summit of the mountains. It was useless to think of reaching the camp that night. We were all worn-out again. I told Ben to select a good place for a camp. He chose a place on an elevation, and arranged the watches for the night. Every man got at least six hours' sleep, and at daylight in the morning we resumed the wearisome march.

When we came to the entrance of the cañon, or rather to the path leading to it, we discovered another trail, which we concluded would take us to the high ground above the bluff. We were not disposed to encounter the perils of passing through the cañon again, and we followed the other path.

At this point we found a path where the Indians had evidently done much passing from the high ground to the flat, and the other way. This might be a valuable discovery to us, and we noted the fact for future use. We soon reached the bluff, and we were now on familiar ground. We followed it until we came to the ford. Our coming had been observed from the camp, for our sentinels overlooked every possible approach to the camp.

When we reached the ford, Sile was on the other side, with a long log he had hauled from the grove below. A moment later I saw Juanita running as fast as she could towards us. As soon as her father saw her, he rushed over the water, and his daughter was soon in his arms. If he did not believe she was safe before, he believed it now. For a long time they remained in each other's embrace, and we did not disturb them, but remained on the other side of the stream.

"Well, jedge, I was afeerd you would never come back," said Sile.

"At one time I had my doubts myself; but we are all right. I want a party to go down the trail at once."

"Down the trail?"

I wished to notify Peterson that Don Ramon was at the camp, and after I had consulted my Mexican friend, he sent an order for his party to remove to our location at once. It was not prudent to send anything less than a fighting party down the trail,

and I told Sile to take the ten men who had remained in camp while we were away, and conduct the enterprise himself. He went off, leaving his log where it was, and mustered his men. He was more excited than I usually found him.

In fifteen minutes or less Sile rode up to the spot where I was lying in the tall grass. He was mounted on his ordinary steed ; but he was evidently thinking of something besides a warlike expedition, for he had not taken his rifle or his breech-loader. I looked at him, and he swung his hat as he rode towards me. He was certainly the most complacent-looking man I ever saw in my life. A broad smile wreathed his wrinkled face, and I judged he was going to tell me that he had found the silver mine for which we had come to look.

"I forgot to tell you, jedge ;" and then he paused.

"What did you forget to tell me, Sile?"

"We picked up a dozen hosses this morning ; and I cal'late some on 'em belonged to that Major Gal-loupe, for I found his name on the saddles some on 'em had on," continued Sile.

I explained the history of the horses he had picked up. He told me they had come up to the ford and crossed it themselves ; and he seemed to think they were glad to get among white men again. Sile rode back to the camp, and presently appeared again at the head of his train, this time with two guns on his person, and all the arms in his belt that he could find room for.



"A COMPLACENT 'DOWN-EASTER.'" — Page 276.

TO THE
AIRBORNE

It was about the middle of the afternoon when we arrived at Castle Hill. Our party, except those who were required to be on duty as sentinels, slept the rest of the afternoon. Don Ramon was provided with a couch of blankets in the caravel, where Juanita watched over him while he slumbered.

It was after dark when Sile returned with the party of Don Ramon. He had seen no Indians, and we thought we had given them enough of it for the present. When Peterson saw the Indian guide, who was secured to a tree, he was disposed to tear him in pieces. He had heard from Sile the main particulars of the treachery to his employer. The fellow was sullen and morose, though I had done all I could to make him comfortable. I had dressed his wound, which was a shot-hole through the fleshy part of his arm.

We had to put on an extra team to haul Don Ramon's baggage-wagon up the slope; and then Juanita was restored to her quarters within it. Her waiting-maid came with the others. Three of the men were wounded, and one had been killed in the affray with the Indians. By this arrival we had ten men, including the Mexican gentleman, added to our party.

Before we retired for the night, we listened to the narrative of Ned Brown first, and then to that of Don Ramon. I have not the space to give any more than the substance of either. Ned and Jake had made their way with extreme caution along the bluff,

keeping, when they could, on the left bank of the stream. Jake climbed trees like a cat, and with as little noise, and surveyed the country for a considerable distance ahead in this manner.

At last they came upon a camp. They saw the warriors of the band half way across the flat; and this was the party which attacked us on the trail. Ben had fully explained his plan to the scouts. The sight of the band hurrying across the flat to attack the white men had assisted them in finding the camp from which they came. From his eyrie in the top of a tall tree the agile German had discovered Juanita by an Indian lodge, with two men guarding her.

Jacob had communicated this information to Ned. Getting nearer to the camp, so that they should have a better chance with their guns, they climbed another tree, following the instructions of the Kentuckian. They had worked their way to a suitable position, ascending by inches that the two sentinels over the maiden need not be disturbed. Ned took careful aim at one of them, and fired. The Indian never moved again.

Ned then discharged his second barrel at the other, taking him while he was trying to ascertain where the gun had been fired from. The shot brought him to the ground, but he was not killed. The scouts descended the tree with all the haste they could and rushed into the camp. The wounded Indian got upon his feet, and was on the point of firing his old flint-lock at the intruders when Jacob picked up an Indian

club, and beat his brains out in the presence of the affrighted Juanita.

The scouts lost no time. Ned took Juanita by the hand and dragged her away from the camp. When they had placed a good distance between themselves and any possible foe, Ned explained who and what he was, and that he had come to take her from the Indians. Though she was quite feeble from the effect of nervous depression, they hurried her back to the trail. Before they reached it, they discovered our party returning from the fight below. When I expressed my astonishment that the report of Ned's gun had not attracted the attention of the Indians, who could not have been far from the camp, as I reckoned the time, Ned explained that Ben had told them not to discharge their pieces on the ground, for the reverberation from the cliff would betray them, while the report from the top of the tree would be supposed to be on the high ground of the plateau.

When Ned had finished his narrative Don Ramon rushed over to him and grasped his hand, expressing his gratitude in the warmest terms. Hal said he wished he had been permitted to do this bit of strategy. I did not hurt his feelings by saying anything, but I think he was so impetuous that he would have failed.

In addition to what Peterson had told us about the Indian guide, Don Ramon informed us that Ojo Negro, or Black Eye, who had duped him into going to the Apache village, told him that he had quarrelled

with his chief, and that he would recover the fair prisoner if he would go with him.

"In course he had quarrelled with his chief," interposed the Kentuckian. "Nary redskin ever gulled a white man with any other yarn."

Don Ramon proceeded to say that, before he reached the cañon, through which we had passed, they were joined by two other Apaches. They threw him on the ground, and took away all his weapons, so that he could not defend himself. They had driven him before them to the point where we interfered with their movements. They had given him nothing to eat; and he did not know that they had anything themselves. They had slept about three hours on the way. He had slept with his captors, with his hands tied behind him, and his feet secured so that he could not run away. It was possible that we had passed them while they slept, though they had gone a portion of the way by a different path from that which our party had taken.

"But what was the object of Ojo Negro in taking you to the village?"

"I don't know," replied Don Ramon; "they gave me no information on that subject. I fancied it had some connection with my daughter. But I did not know then that she had escaped. If Ojo knew it he said nothing about it. I should have been happy as his prisoner if I had known the fact."

"He did know it," said Ben, confidently. "Arter they got you into their village they would have

coaxed your daughter to go and see you. This bogus guide would have come to our camp with a flag of truce, or sunthin' o' that sort, and spun just such a yarn as he reeled off to you."

We talked about the matter till we were all sleepy enough to roll ourselves up in our blankets. All the guards for the night were taken from Sile's party and that of Don Ramon; and those who had twice crossed the mountains were not disturbed during the night. In the morning those who had not been injured in the passage through the cañon were full as good as new.

When I walked over the camp about daylight, I found that Sile had improved the time during my absence, and he had logs enough on the edge of the cañon to construct the bridge. Our men did not work on the ten-hour system, and before sunrise, every one of them, except those who were on the sick-list or were doing duty as sentinels, was on the ground. In the high tree on the verge of the chasm, which I had told Sile not to fell, he had rigged a rude block, made by one of the men, forty feet from the ground. At the foot of the tree was another, to be used as a snatch-block.

I doubted if the block was strong enough to hold the log that was to form one of the stringers of the bridge. Our longest rope was rove in the blocks, and two horses attached to the power end of it. The only thing that bothered Sile was that he had no one on the other side of the cañon to assist in that direc-

tion. He had scarcely spoken of this difficulty out loud before Jacob grasped the end of the rope that hung down from the block, and, getting a swing upon it, he was suspended in the air over the abyss. Letting go at the right time, he landed on the other side. So far as we knew he was the first man that ever stood on Castle Hill.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

SILE CARTER EXCITED. — THE MACHINERY FOR BUILDING THE BRIDGE. — NED AND HAL CROSS THE CAÑON. — RAISING THE FIRST STRINGER. — THE LOG IN POSITION. — JUANITA ENCOURAGES THE ENGINEER OF THE BRIDGE. — THE BRIDGE FINISHED. — THE PROCESSION OVER IT. — ARRANGEMENTS ON CASTLE HILL. — THE BATTERY. — THE SENTINELS. — THE EXCAVATION. — INDIANS IN GREAT NUMBERS. — THE APPROACHING TRAIN. — THE AMBUSH.

THE hunters gave a cheer when they saw Jacob Yäger land on the other side of the chasm. Sile Carter was delighted to have the only difficulty in the way of his operations removed. He made a timber hitch in the end of the rope, and secured it to the log, about ten feet from the smaller end. The horses were hitched to the other end of the rope, and the teamster led them slowly away from the chasm.

"Now she rises!" exclaimed Sile, as delighted as a child with a plaything when he realized that the plan was a success so far.

"You are all right, Sile, if the blocks don't split, and let the stick down again. I think it is not quite safe to stand near it."

I walked away from the log, and most of the people followed my example. The bridge-builder

merely stepped to the other side of the tree. But the blocks did not break, and the fact that they did not, spoke a volume of praise for the maker of them, for he had to use green wood, and had only an inch and a half auger, a broadaxe, and a saw.

"Hold on!" shouted Sile to the teamster, when the log came home to the upper block. "Nothin's broke yit, jedge, and I don't cal'late anything will break."

A hand was sent up the tree with the end of another rope, which he made fast to the upper end of the log. The other end of this line was heaved across the chasm by Ben Cavendish, who was as good to obey as he was to command. The stick stood on end now, and was to be lowered so that the upper part would cross the cañon. Jacob took the line which had been sent over to him, and taking a single turn around a tree, he hauled in as the long rope was slacked off by backing the horses.

But the log seemed to be as fractious as a mule, and Jacob's utmost strength was not enough to make it fall in the right direction. Ned ran up the tree almost as easily as the German had done it. Taking to the guide-line he slid down to the other side of the chasm. Hal did not quite like to be outdone by his companion, and he followed him in the same way. More would have gone if I had not checked them.

Ned made another turn around the tree, and gave the end of the rope to Hal. The German and Ned then heaved on the line, and Hal kept what they got.

The horses were backed again, and the log descended in the desired direction. As soon as it was started right it went down without further difficulty. In a few minutes more the first stringer of the bridge lay across the chasm. Sile was almost beside himself in his delight, and Juanita, who with her maid, Josefa, had come up to the chasm as soon as the log was in position, said a great many pretty things to the engineer, which pleased him even more than his success.

The second stringer was laid in its place in the same manner; and then a third. The planking consisted of sticks cut at the right length, and about six inches in diameter. We had now over thirty men in the camp, twenty-four of whom were available to Sile in finishing the bridge. With two men to each stick, they made quick work of putting them on the stringers. The planking was then covered with earth and sods, and by the middle of the forenoon the bridge was completed.

We formed a sort of procession and marched over to Castle Hill, where we spent half an hour in examining the place. I selected a site for the caravel on the highest ground, where we could command the bridge, and also see all the region about us. We found some strange formations of rock on the hill, but we did not stay to examine them then, for Sile was anxious to move the camp to the land of promise which he had opened to us.

Although there was considerable pasturage on the

hill, I decided that the horses should remain where they were for the present, as the feed was excellent on Burial Hill, as I had named it, for it was the last resting-place of poor Jerry Benson. There were about twenty acres in this hill, and about half as many in Castle Hill.

Upper and Lower River ran due north on each side of Burial Hill, while the course of the Gila was due west, and formed the northern boundary of this hill. Lower River ran through the cañon formerly, and did in part now at the season of high-water. The new stream encircled Castle Hill.

At the upper end of the cañon, that is, at the ford, near the foot of the hill, a bend in Upper River made the neck of land between the two streams not more than forty rods wide. Burial Hill was therefore a peninsula, and on all its water sides were precipitous bluffs. It was apparently impossible to ascend or descend them. The only approach to the hill was a narrow one, and this was protected by the two guns.

We hauled the caravel and the two wagons across the bridge by hand. The iron ark was placed on the top of the hill, with one side to the bridge. At the foot of the hill, farthest from the cañon, the two wagons were placed, one of which was already fitted up as the chamber of Juanita and Josefa. In the other we made beds for Don Ramon, the two boys, Peterson, and myself. Before night we were comfortably installed in our new camp.

The next day, Ben Cavendish had the use of the men, and he constructed a battery for the two guns, for which he already felt a warm affection. He called them "The Pets." I had intended to take the two guns over to Castle Hill, but Ben reasoned me out of this idea by showing that we could not defend the horses if we did so.

"What has become of all the Apaches?" asked Don Ramon, in the evening, after the camp and the battery were put in first-rate condition.

"I think they can't be far off. Probably they know all about the situation of this hill, and do not consider it prudent to attack us here."

"Don't be consarned about the Apaches," added Ben, shaking his head; "we shall see enough of them yet. We have punished 'em pooty smart, and I reckon they mought not be quite ready to start in on us agin."

"Do you think there are any of them around here, Ben?" asked the Mexican.

"You bet? They have taken the measure of all we have done the last two days. Some on 'em hes seen your darter every time she hes went out of that baggage-wagin," added the Kentuckian. "They ain't goin' to let us rest hyer in peace no mor'n nothin' on airth."

But we did not see a single Indian during the next week, and things were getting a little monotonous in the camp. We kept two sentinels at the battery, and two on the top of Burial Hill, where the latter

could overlook the trail on the Gila in both directions.

During this week Don Ramon and myself examined Castle Hill thoroughly. On the north side of the central hill we found a place which looked like an excavation that had been filled up. This was possibly the silver mine for which we were in search, and we began at once the work of throwing out the stone. We found the men did not like the labor even so well as they did that of fighting the Indians. We continued the work in our second week at the castle. But only a few men could work at once, and not one of them was required to do half a day's labor.

Don Ramon had considerable information in regard to the location, and we had planned several trips to points in the vicinity, which we hoped would open the way to the discovery we desired to make. One of us stayed at the working-place, to observe the signs that were apparent as the opening progressed. It was slow progress that we made. I was attending to this duty one day when word was brought to me that a vast horde of Indians were to be seen from the upper station. They were reported to be moving up the great trail, as we always called that by the Gila.

I called Don Ramon, and we walked together to the summit of Burial Hill. The number and position of the Indians appeared to be correctly given. I could not estimate the number of the band with any degree of accuracy, but I judged that there were between two and three hundred of them. They had

passed the branch trail that led to the ford at the foot of the hill, and they evidently did not intend to attack us ; at least not at present.

"A long train of wagons is coming down the trail from above," shouted the sentinel.

We hastened to the spot where he stood, which commanded a view up the river for a considerable distance. We saw the head of the procession, and enough of the body of it to satisfy us that the sentinel had correctly stated the facts. But we could not yet see the end of the train, and we had no means of knowing how much longer it was. It consisted of baggage-wagons and mounted men. I sent Hal for my field-glass, for I thought it possible the train might be United States troops.

While I was waiting for the glass, the Indians, whom we recognized as Apaches as soon as they came near enough to be distinctly seen, came to a halt at the mouth of Lower River. As I have stated before, the space between the two rivers had to be passed by taking to the water, or fording it from one stream to the other. At most seasons of the year the river was so low that they did not have to go into the water except in crossing the mouth of the two tributary streams.

"That's a good place for an attack upon a train," said Don Ramon, as the Indians halted at the lower end of the ford of the Gila.

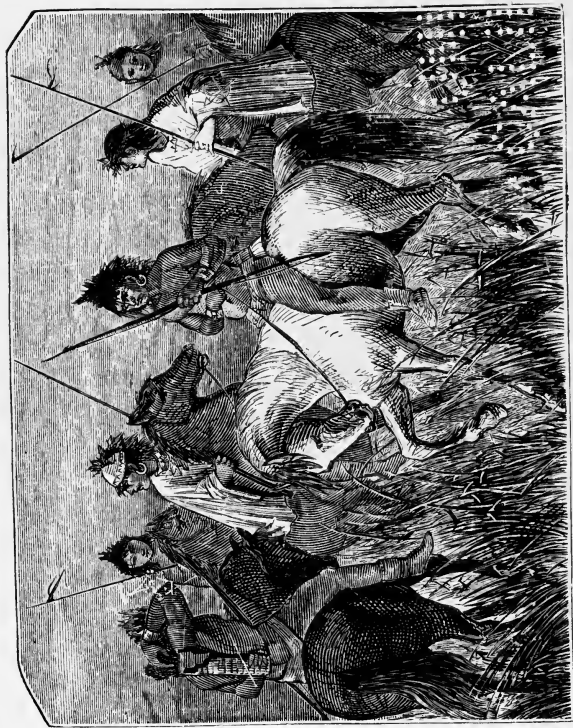
"They couldn't find a better ; and I fancy that is what they are here for. We haven't seen this band

before ; at least not many of them, that I can recognize."

They were a hard-looking set of human beings. Some of them were on horseback ; and they rode good animals, for the most part. None of those who were mounted carried guns, though a few of the men on foot were provided with such a quality of firearms as we had seen in the hands of other bands. Some were almost naked, and a few had robes like cloaks. They carried their bows in their hands.

The horsemen had no saddles, or even bridles, though a rope or a strap in the mouth of the horse was a substitute for it. A small party of them rode out from the main body, apparently to reconnoitre the ground, and we looked down upon them, seeing them very distinctly. One of them wore a sort of helmet, and I took him for the chief. He was a comparatively young man, and I wondered if he was not the magnate for whom Juanita had been intended when she was borne to the camp of our assailants ; but I did not suggest this idea to Don Ramon.

The party returned to their companions, and I saw the young man with the helmet on his head give some orders to the band. In a few moments they were all out of sight behind a little grove at the mouth of the river. It was plain now what they meant.



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CHAPTER XXXV.

SIGNALS AMONG THE APACHES. — THE ADVANCE GUARD OF THE TRAIN. — MY MESSAGE TO THEM. — THEY RETIRE. — A CONSULTATION. — ENCAMPED FOR THE NIGHT. — SLEEPING ON IT. — IN THE MORNING. — THE ATTACKING PARTY FROM THE TRAIN. — AN AMBUSH AGAINST AN AMBUSH. — THE FIRST SHOT. — THE ENEMY BEWILDERED. — A PANIC. — ATTACK OF THE TRAIN-MEN. — BEN DISLODGES THE INDIANS. — ROUTED AND RETREATING. — DEPARTURE OF THE TRAIN.

BY this time the train was within a quarter of a mile of the hill. Hal had brought me my glass, and Juanita had come with him, for she wanted to see what was to be seen. I examined the train with the glass, and satisfied myself that it was not a government party. If they had been, I should have considered them competent to take care of themselves; and they would have regarded any action on our part as an interference.

"It looks as though these Indians knew that this train was coming," said Don Ramon, after he had pointed it out to Juanita, and sent her back to the castle with Hal.

"No doubt of it. They say the Apaches have methods of signalling from one body to another for miles. Probably the Apaches had messengers in this case, unless there is a way to signal to the high grounds above us."

"They knew of the approach of this train; and it don't make much difference how they obtained their information," added Don Ramon. "I suppose we can't do much for them up here."

"I think we can do quite as much up here as we could on the flat; perhaps more."

As I spoke I took from my pocket an old letter, and wrote upon it: "Turn back. The Indians will attack you at the other end of the ford. They are in ambush." I signed my name to the paper, and then tied it to a stick.

Half a dozen men rode ahead of the train as the advance guard. When they entered the water, they halted for their horses to drink. Directly over them was a rock which projected out over the river, where our sentinel generally stood, as the position commanded a view of the river, above and below. I rushed out upon this projection, and dropped the stick to which I had fastened the writing into the water. It fell between the two foremost of the men. I saw one of them pick it up, and tear the paper from it.

The rider read it and then looked up in the air to see where the friendly message had come from. I was content for the present with warning the party,

and I did not show myself to them. They could not see any one of us, unless he had stretched out his neck over the rock. The riders consulted together for some time, but I could not hear what they said.

At the conclusion of the talk, the advance guard of the train rode back to the main body. The line of wagons was halted, and I saw the scouting party hand the paper to a man near the head of the train. I judged by the gestures of the man who had handed in the written message that he was describing the position the Apaches must occupy.

By this time Ben Cavendish, who had come by right of his ability to be the commander-in-chief of our war parties, though Sile was still the second in authority, had gathered all the fighting men of our camp on the top of the hill, with the exception of the two sentinels at the battery. I had a talk with him, and he was no more disposed to interfere with the affair in progress below than I was, until the occasion seemed to require it. I told him what I had done, and he was willing to wait for further action below; but he was ready for anything.

It was now nearly night, and the result of the talk in the train was that the party encamped where they were. Perhaps this was done to avoid a conflict in the dark with the Apaches; and I commended their wisdom. They were safe where they were, for the Indians could only reach them by fording the Gila. A strong guard was stationed at the lower end of the camp, where they could take any enemy approaching

them in the water, as the Apaches evidently intended to do by them, and thus obtain a great advantage.

I waited on the hill until it was dark; but not an Indian showed himself. I had no doubt they were in a state of expectancy, but no train appeared to reward their vigilance. My pencil note had robbed them of their prey for the present; but there were likely to be stirring times at the Gila ford the next day. Probably the Indians reconnoitred their expected victims from the river, or by sending men across lower down. We doubled our sentinels and either Ben or Sile was on the watch all night.

Don Ramon and I went to bed as usual, and I slept as well as ever I did in my life, so much confidence had I in the watchful care maintained over our camp. But at daylight in the morning Don Ramon, the boys, and I hastened to the bluff, anxious to ascertain the position of things. The sentinel reported that no change had taken place in affairs below.

We waited patiently for developments. I soon saw that the men in charge of the train had no intention of turning back, and prosecuting their journey by some less dangerous path. At sunrise, all the armed men of the party who were mounted on rather jaded horses, from which I concluded that they had come through from Texas, formed near the ford. I saw that they were going to feel of the enemy, and drive them off if they could. I called Ben.

"I think we had better take a hand in this pickle."

"All right, jedge; jest as you say," he replied, with his usual real or apparent indifference. "Ef you say clean out them Injens, I reckon 'twill be done as soon as sarcumstances will permit, if not sooner."

"Those are fine-looking men belonging to the train, and I don't want to see them butchered; or even plundered of their horses and stores before our eyes without doing something for them."

"We'll clean out them Injens as soon as they show their dirty faces," replied Ben, as he moved off to his men.

The next I saw of Ben he was crossing the bridge, with about twenty men behind him. Others he had stationed on the cliff overhanging Lower River, below the castle. The larger party he marched to the north side of Castle Hill. As his party approached the bluff, I saw that they moved with great caution, and at last his men lay down on the ground and crawled to the verge of the precipice. It was impossible for any of the Indians below to know what was going on upon the high ground where we were.

The only point which commanded a view of the two hills which we occupied was the ground beyond the ford, and above the pond. There were no Apaches there; if there had been the sentinels would have seen them. Not a native had been seen in this portion of the high ground since our arrival, though we had expected them to appear for two days after our arrival.

At the northwest corner of Castle Hill there was a rock extending from the water in the river to the level of the hill at its base, which presented the appearance of a couple of columns, and formed a bastion. It reached out about fifteen feet from the main body of the island. To this point Ben and Buck Sykes, with three others, all armed with breech-loaders, proceeded. This position afforded a view of the flat on the north and west of the castle, as well as a sight through the opening between Pear Island, and the mouth of the Lower River, so that Ben could see the party from the train before the Indians, unless they came out from their covert in the grove and bushes.

Hal and Ned were stationed at the verge of the precipice on Burial Hill. Don Ramon and I joined them there. We were both armed in full, and were ready to take part in the coming affray, which, however, was to be no affray at all so far as our party were concerned. The Apaches were in ambush, intending to fall upon the approaching party in the ford; and our thirty men were in ambush to shoot down the Apaches as soon as they showed themselves. Up to this time not an Indian had shown himself.

"But don't they know that we are here?" asked Don Ramon, in a whisper.

"They act as though they did not. I do not recognize a single Indian that I have seen before, and I have looked them over very thoroughly. I

am inclined to think that this is not the party we encountered before. It may be another of the eight bands of this tribe."

"If it is the same band that attacked you and me before it would be stupid for them to operate here, with a strong body of white men in their rear," added Don Ramon.

"I think the party we met before have gone over the mountains and retired to their village, where Ojo Negro was conducting you."

The crack of a rifle terminated our conversation, which was carried on in a low tone. It was Ben Cavendish who had opened the ball. I looked down upon the flat. We could not see the ford in the Gila from the point where we were stationed, but the movements of the Indians were all in view. I saw them creeping out from their concealment in the grove.

The first one that appeared dropped upon the ground when the Kentuckian fired his long rifle. He did not move again, and some of his companions dragged him out of the way. The Apaches seemed to be staggered by this shot, and looked about them to ascertain where it came from. At this moment a general fire was opened upon the Indians from both of the bluffs that overlooked the flat. Indian after Indian fell, and the others seemed to be utterly confounded by the continuous fire that was poured into them.

While the Apaches were panic-stricken by the

number of their band who had fallen, the horsemen from the train came in sight. They began to fire upon the Indians, and their fire was not in vain. Suddenly the savages, seeing that they had no chance at all, retreated to the cover of the bluff, where we could no longer see them. Possibly the travellers believed they had done the fearful execution they saw themselves, though I did not see how they could entertain such an idea.

"Ben is up to something," said Hal, as the firing along our line ceased, though it was kept up by the horsemen from the train.

"What is he doing?"

A crash on the rocks below, which bordered the stream, informed us what he was doing. The Apaches had evidently forded the river in order to find a more secure position at the base of the bluff. The Kentuckian and his companions were rolling loose rocks down upon the enemy. A terrible yell followed the crash, and the Apaches came out from their fancied security under the overhanging cliff. We fired at them again as they came in sight; but they did not wait to return the fire. Those who were mounted dashed off as fast as their horses could carry them; and I saw that the chief in the helmet was one of the number. I sent a ball after him, but I missed my aim. Those on foot followed them as fast as their legs would carry them.

It was all over in a few minutes; but at least a dozen of the Apaches had been killed, and twice as

many had been badly wounded. The train men returned to the ford as soon as they realized that the enemy had been defeated, and presently the long line of wagons came out of the water, and proceeded down the trail.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

AN INDIAN AT THE FORD. — WHAT IT MEANT. — LOOKING OVER THE BATTERY. — AN EXTREME SUPPOSITION. — THE KENTUCKIAN CONSIDERS THE SITUATION. — THE SEARCH FOR SILVER. — AT THE EXCAVATION. — AN UNPOETICAL TASK. — NED AND HAL WITH SPECIMENS. — IN THE CAÑON. — SOMETHING ABOUT IT. — A DISMAL PLACE. — THE SHELF IN THE ROCK. — DON RAMON EXCITED. — AS A SECRET. — THE TRUMPET BLAST FROM THE BATTERY.

THE excitement was over for the present, and we went to breakfast. While we were discussing the meal and the events of the morning word came to us that an Indian had been seen over beyond the ford. As only one appeared we concluded it was only a scout, and that the party which had been defeated so thoroughly on the flat were disposed to inquire into the nature of the force on the high ground that had punished them so severely.

We finished the meal, and allowed the Indian scouts to reconnoitre as much as they pleased. We could be approached only on one of our four sides, and it looked disgraceful, under the circumstances, to get up a sensation for one Indian. We were invincible to all the Indians in the territory, unless we

made some mistake. But then most battles are lost by mistakes ; if not, then two armies of equal force might fight till the end of time without any decided result.

After breakfast I walked with Ben down to the battery. He had made every arrangement in that quarter for the defence of our position. We could see no Indians, but there might be a thousand on the high ground beyond the ford. We certainly had horses and stores enough to tempt them ; and we had all set it down as a certainty that our position would be attacked sooner or later. The Apaches seemed never to know when they were beaten. They lost battles, but that did not deter them from pushing their arms wherever there was a chance for plunder or an opportunity to dislodge the whites.

"I am not sure that your battery is in the right place, Ben, after all."

"I reckon it is in the right place ef we are gwine to defend these two hills," replied Ben, looking at me with surprise.

"I agree to that ; but suppose we are driven out from this position?"

"Driven out of it? I reckon we won't s'pose no such thing," protested the Kentuckian. "There ain't Indians enough this side of the Rocky Mountains to drive us out of it."

"How many Indians did you ever fight at once, Ben?"

"More'n three hundred."

"How many men had you?"

"Only twenty."

"Then you were lucky. Suppose five hundred Indians should set about breaking through our line here into the camp?"

"Ef they set about it I reckon it would be a sore time for 'em."

"I think it would be, Ben. But we have driven them to desperation. We have whipped them in several attacks they have made upon us."

"I don't keer how desp'ate they be."

"If they should stick to it long enough, though we killed a hundred of them, there would be four hundred of them to crowd us down; and they might get over the battery."

"Ef our men don't stand up to it, and keep standin' up to it, they mought drive us back. Then we should lose the hosses."

"And the guns, Ben. We should lose our best means of defence."

"But, jedge, you are s'posin' sunthin' that ain't agoin' to happen no more'n nothin' in the world."

"It is always best to look on the worst side of the matter."

"I'll look it over, jedge. Mebbe you are right."

I left the Kentuckian to consider the matter, and walked back to Castle Hill. Don Ramon had the men at work on the mine. Thus far we had discovered no evidence that the excavation we were making had ever been opened before. There was no poetry at all

in the operations we were conducting, and the men all worked under protest. They wanted something more stirring than throwing rocks out of a hole.

"Do you find anything, judge?" asked Ned, as he and Hal came up to the excavation.

"Nothing yet, Ned. We don't expect to find anything without labor, though some of the greatest silver mines in the world have been discovered by accident."

"What do you call that?" asked Ned, as he held out his hand, which contained some substance so large that it was all he could hold out with one hand.

"It looks like silver."

There is a good deal of fool's silver and gold dug out of the earth, and I was not in haste to come to a decision. I called Don Ramon, who had seen a great deal more of silver mining than I had. He took the lump of ore in his hand and looked it over.

"That is silver!" exclaimed he, his face lighting up with satisfaction.

"Are you sure, Don Ramon?" asked Hal, who was quite as much interested in the matter as Ned.

"Am I sure? Have I lived all my life in the midst of silver operations and don't know the article when I see it?" replied Don Ramon, beginning to warm up as his favorite topic came before him. "That is virgin silver."

"There are so many things that look like silver that I wanted to know about this," added Ned.

"That is the pure article," added the Mexican.

"And what is this?" inquired Hal, as he produced a small lump of yellow metal; at least it looked like metal, though it might have been some other mineral, one of the specimens of fool's gold.

"That is virgin gold," replied Don Ramon, after he had examined the specimen.

Though the small piece was of greater value than the large piece of silver, the mining operator seemed to be much more interested in the silver. He was rich enough without any more gold or silver, but the ruling passion was strong with him.

"Where did you find this?" he asked, holding up the specimen of silver.

"In the cañon," replied Ned, quietly; and his manner was in contrast with that of the Mexican gentleman.

"In the cañon!"

This was my exclamation, for thus far the cañon had been pronounced impassable and impenetrable. I was afraid the boys had been risking their lives in some foolish venture. Besides, if it was possible to penetrate the cañon, the Indians might get into it, and find their way into the camp on the island. We had not explored it, and its secrets were unrevealed to us.

"Yes, sir; we found it down in the cañon," repeated Ned. He smiled and seemed to be rather pleased with the sensation he had created.

"How did you get into the cañon? We have not yet found any way of entering it at the upper end; and we have not examined the other end."

The river poured over a cataract into a dark abyss just below the ford, and the only way to get into the cañon from that quarter would have been to jump into the deep basin of water, whipped into foam, which we could make out in the darkness of the abyss. I was sure no person could pass through the chasm unless they found a way to climb the cataract in the face of the rushing stream. I judged that the water did not flow over the precipice that formed the upper end of the cañon in the dry season; but the rock was not to be scaled without ladders or some equivalent appliances.

"We went down into the cañon. There wasn't any other way to get into it," answered Ned.

"Don't fool about it, Ned. The Apaches are scouting near the ford; and if there is any way for them to get into the cañon I want to know it before a band of them break in upon us where we don't expect them."

"We were not looking for silver or gold, judge; and we were not thinking it possible that the Indians could get into the cañon. It is the worst-looking hole I ever went into; and Hal will say the same. No Apaches could come up from the lower end unless they had wings, and only angels wear them."

"You don't say how you got into the cañon, Ned."

I was beginning to be angry with the boy, though he very seldom vexed my spirit.

"Sile Carter's hoisting rope is still made fast in the tree, we dropped the end into the cañon, and

went down on that," said Ned, coming to the point at last. "We hauled up the line after us, and I don't reckon no Apaches will come up that way, as Ben would say."

"No danger from the Apaches in that direction, judge," said the Mexican silver operator. He seemed to be quite excited. The report of the boys appeared to suggest something to him.

"It is not a very convenient place to get at where we found these specimens," added Hal.

"Have you told anybody what you found, Ned," asked Don Ramon, with a glance at the men who were at work in the hole.

"Not a soul; we haven't seen anybody since we came up, just as we walked up here," answered Ned.

"Then don't mention the matter to a single person, at least not till we have examined very carefully the place where you found this silver," added the Mexican, nervously, as he looked again at the men in the hole. But they were too far off to hear anything that had been said.

"We will be as secret as the silver has been since the foundation of the earth," added Ned, who was not quite sure whether he was playing a part in a drama or a farce.

"Was it at the bottom of the cañon that you found these specimens?" asked Don Ramon.

"No, sir; it was about half way down," said Hal. "Ned went down first, and I followed him. I found him standing on a kind of shelf, and there was some-

thing in the nature of a cave farther back. At any rate, there was a considerable hole. It was rather dark, but I saw something bright, and Ned picked this up. I found the gold."

"They are often found together," added the silver expert.

"But you don't seem to think the gold was worth bringing up, Don Ramon," added Ned.

"Of course the gold is valuable, but it is found in very small quantities compared with the silver. We will secure all we can of both. We are not in condition to work a silver mine at present, and we had better keep the secret. If it proves to be a silver mine, I will go down into it as soon as I have an opportunity, and we shall know where to come when we are ready to operate it."

"Don't you think we had better go down now, while the rope is in place, for Sile may remove it when he wants it for something else," suggested Hal.

"I am ready to go now. We will ——."

Don Ramon's reply was interrupted by the shrill blast of the horn, which was the signal for all the party to hasten to the battery. In a word it was the danger signal.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

AT THE BATTERY. — NO INDIANS IN SIGHT. — BEN'S REPORT OF HIS SCOUTING. — CONJECTURES IN REGARD TO THE FORCE OF THE ENEMY. — THE KENTUCKIAN'S ADMISSION. — A PARTY OF SKIRMISHERS. — THE FIRE FROM THE BREASTWORK. — THE MOUNTED INDIANS FROM THE FLAT. — THE HELMED CHIEF. — UNHORSED. — GREAT SLAUGHTER. — FEARFUL YELLS. — ADVANCE OF THE MAIN BODY. — THE FORCE OF NUMBERS. — THE FIRST FIRE OF THE TWELVE-POUNDER.

AT the sound of the horn, which was blown by Buck Sykes at the order of the Kentuckian, we dropped the subject of silver and silver mining, and proceeded to the caravel, where we snatched up our arms, and hastened to the battery. Every man in the party was there, or soon appeared, with the single exception of the sentinel on the top of the hill; and he was not to leave his post except upon a special order.

As we were picking up our arms, we saw Juanita and Josefa climbing over the ladder at the end of the caravel. Don Ramon told his daughter to keep down below the iron sides of the ark, so that a chance shot might not harm her. They had been

instructed before to do this in case of an attack upon the camp.

But when we reached the battery we saw nothing of any Indians, though Ben was not the man to raise a false alarm. By this time Ben had extended a breastwork entirely across the peninsula, which served as rifle-pits for our men, and answered the purpose of a fence to keep the horses within the enclosure on the hill. This had been a slow job, for we had but two shovels in our party, to which Don Ramon had added one more. Outside, that is, on the ford side, the sod had been laid on the earth, so that it did not look very different from the ground as nature left it.

Behind his earthwork the Kentuckian had posted the men. Buck Sykes was in charge of one gun, and Emile Pont of the other. Some of the vaqueros had been drilled in the handling of the pieces, so that no more of the hunters might be taken from the defence than was necessary.

With the boards from the caravel platforms had been built, so that the heavy guns could be handled with ease. Ben had spent his whole time in strengthening the works since the arrival of Don Ramon, and had made a business of drilling the men for their duty. As I looked at the preparations I thought it extremely unlikely that we could be driven from the position.

"I don't see any Indians."

I said this to Ben as soon as I had inspected his

preparations for the fight, — if there was to be a fight, for there was not even a windmill to engage us yet.

"The woods is full on 'em," replied the Kentuckian. "I don't say there's a million, but there is a powerful lot on 'em."

"But I don't see a single one; and I don't know how you can see any more of them than I can."

"They hain't got here yet; but there's a lot o' scouts prowlin' around on the other side of the ford. Buck and I has been over thar and I reckon we seen all there is to see."

"Is it the same band we routed down on the flat?"

"Some on 'em is, and some on 'em isn't. I reckon the big chief hes jest come."

"Who? Cochise?"

"I don't know who he is; and I wouldn't know him for a pound of the best plug from old Kaintuck."

"What makes you think there is any big chief among them?"

Ben generally talked more or less in riddles. The two principal chiefs of the Apaches in this section at this time were Cochise and Mangus Colorado. If there was any big chief among the approaching horde it must have been one or both of these.

"Buck and I has been over thar, and walked more'n a mile down the cliff. One o' the scouts fired a flintlock at us; but neither on us got hit. We left the feller layin' on the ground; and he won't git up till

he's picked up. We got on a hill, and I reckon we see nigh on to tew hund'd on 'em windin' up the hill."

"Two hundred of them. There were more than that in the band we cleaned out this morning before breakfast."

"Them is further over towards the bluff. I reckon we shall have the whole on 'em; and that will make nigh on to five hundred. We seen both bands on 'em; and they reckon on makin' things hot for us."

"Perhaps they will make it hot for us."

This account of the approaching force gave me some uneasiness, and I wished Ben had erected his battery at the southwest corner of Castle Hill, which would have placed the cañon between us and the enemy. If the Apaches attempted to ascend Burial Hill, we could clean them out with the cannon and grapeshot or shrapnel, a supply of both of which was in the magazine Ben had built.

But it was too late now to think of what might have been, and we had to deal only with what was. I had no doubt that Ben's information was substantially correct. I reasoned that the parties who had been whipped by our men in several encounters had reported the condition of things in the vicinity of the ford of the Gila. This large force had come to "clean us out," and open the way to the plunder of which they had been shut out by our prowess.

I thought that the two bands were to meet in this vicinity. The one we had beaten in the morning

had arrived a day ahead of the other. I wondered what they had been doing since morning. It was possible that they had followed the long wagon train, and had succeeded better than when we took a hand in the affray.

"We can't do nothin' now, jedge, but take things as they are; but I reckon it would have been better if we had put the battery over on the corner of the island," said Ben, after he had given me the particulars of the force moving down upon us. "But these breastworks won't do us no harm. I've got four hosses rigged to haul the guns over the bridge, if things go wrong with us. Then we kin drop the bridge into the cañon, and fight it out till doomsday."

"I see 'em!" shouted Buck Sykes from the battery.

"Then I reckon I'd better 'tend to things," added Ben, as he walked away from me.

I found a place between the boys, behind the breastwork. All the force were provided with rifles or muskets, and a dozen of them had the breech-loaders. Every man was concealed behind the earth-work, so that when the Indians came they could not see a single combatant on our side. Ben passed the word for all hands to keep silence when the Indians could be seen, and most of us were disposed to do so before they appeared.

"Don't be careless, boys. The men are expected to keep out of sight, and it is not a big thing to expose yourselves to danger unnecessarily. It is

better to come out of the fight with a whole skin than get a reputation for courage with a bullet-hole through your head or your breast."

"I am willing to believe all that, judge; and if we are going to be nabobs out of that silver mine in the cañon — if there is any silver mine there — we could not enjoy our share very well with a head, or even a leg or arm shot off," replied Ned.

"That is sensible; don't you think so, Hal?"

"I do, judge; but I like to see a fellow have pluck enough to keep up his end of the row when there is any dangerous service to be rendered," answered Hal.

"Every man in the camp knows that both of you are as brave as lions, for you have proved it; and no one will think any more of you for uselessly exposing yourselves."

I thought the boys needed this caution, for they were both disposed to be over-venturesome. I was afraid Hal would feel it incumbent upon himself to do some big thing in order to win the praise of Juanita. I was glad to hear him talk in a sensible manner. He had wonderfully improved since our bickerings on the Colorado, and before he left Buena Vista. I think we had knocked a good deal of his vanity out of him, but without injuring his self-respect.

"There they come!" said Ned, in a whisper.

Some leafless bushes had been placed on the top of the breastwork, which concealed our heads when

they were partly raised from those at a distance, while they did not prevent us from taking good aim through the branches. I looked and saw about a dozen Apaches dancing down the hill from the pond. They were on foot, and started at their swiftest run towards the breastwork. They could not see us, but they evidently knew we were there.

As they approached the ford, they halted, and discharged their guns and let fly their arrows. At about the same instant a party of mounted Indians dashed up the hill from the flat, and leaped through the river at the ford. Among them I saw the young chief who wore the helmet.

From this it appeared that part of the attacking force were to come up from the flat. At this moment Ben discharged his long rifle, and I saw the helmed chief tumble from his horse. This event produced a yell from the party in front of us, which was taken up by the rest of them whom we could not see; but it sounded as though myriads were joining in the hideous cry.

Two of the Indians on foot immediately approached the fallen chief, and bore him into the shelter of the rocks beyond the pond. Ben's shot was the signal for us to open, and we began to fire all along the breastwork. The enemy dropped before the well-aimed guns of our party, and it looked as though one half of them had bitten the dust before there was any general movement on the part of the main body.

I could not understand the stupidity of sending out a mere handful of men in front of the breastwork, if they knew what the grassy bank was, to be shot down, unless it was to draw our fire, and show where we were. They could not see us any better than before, but they could not help knowing where we were. With our breech-loaders we continued to fire with great rapidity. They might as well have left their weapons on the bluff, for they were as useless in their hands as though they were nothing but pine sticks.

But even Apaches could not stand this long. The best disciplined soldiers in the world would have fled from such a needless sacrifice. Suddenly the remnant of the skirmishers, if that is what they were, took to their heels, and disappeared beyond the pond. Beyond this point was an opening, and we could see that the ground was covered with the multitude who were to take part in the assault.

So far everything had worked just as it had early in the morning. I hoped they would see that it was of no use for them to attempt to storm our works. But there came a yell more tremendous than the one we had heard before, and the Indians poured down upon the open space in front of the battery. We fired into them, and they began to drop as before. But it was like killing flies, for the ground in front of us was crowded with the Apaches; the mass reached back as far as the pond, and we could still see them in the opening beyond.

The crowd behind forced those in front of them forward, and it looked to me as though the case I had supposed to Ben was about to be realized. The killed and wounded were piled up in front of us, but the living ones were pressed forward, so that there was no chance to retreat.

"Fire!" said Ben Cavendish; and the first of the twelve-pounders shook the hills with its thundering report.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

THE EFFECT OF THE SHOT FROM THE TWELVE-POUNDER. — A PROSTRATE BAND. — WHAT THE INDIANS MAY HAVE SUPPOSED. — BEN'S REMARKS ON THE SUBJECT. — BEN'S ORDER. — A MURMURING SOUND. — IT BECOMES A YELL. — WHAT WE OUGHT TO HAVE DONE. — THE KENTUCKIAN, ON THE MILITARY SITUATION. — THE APACHES RENEW THE FIRE. — HAL WOUNDED. — THE AMATEUR SURGEON. — THE BOY'S PLUCK. — INDIAN TACTICS. — HAL'S ONE-HAND SHOT.

THE report of the twelve-pounder seemed very much like an earthquake to me. It was a long time since I had heard the report of a cannon, and it sounded all the louder to me for this reason. We were all, friend and foe, enveloped in smoke ; and we had no means of knowing yet with what result the great gun had been discharged.

The interest which the firing of the cannon had caused among the men was so strong that they ceased to discharge their guns, which was just as well, since they could not see the foe to take aim at them. The wind was from the south, and drove the smoke upon the battery, so that we were the last to have a clear air.

"I don't reckon them critters will want more'n one o' them shot," said Ben, while we were waiting to see what had been accomplished.

"I hope it will not be necessary to fire the other gun. The first must have made terrible execution among such a crowd."

"I hope not, jedge; but 'twan't no use; they'd been inside the breastwork by this time if we hadn't fired it," added Ben. "I didn't let 'em have it afore I seen that they needed it."

"There was no other way to do, Ben. We could have held our own against any reasonable number of them; but when they came by hundreds they would have overwhelmed us. They will get used to great guns, though, and I should not care to risk another battle. The smoke is clearing away."

As the wind wafted the smoke away, we saw, to our intense astonishment, the whole pack of Indians lying on the ground. Some of them were there from necessity, for the shrapnel had made fearful havoc among the dense crowd huddled together in front of us. But all of them could not have been killed or wounded. If they had all run away, it would have seemed the most natural thing in the world to do. But they had all dropped upon the ground as though every individual Indian had been hit.

I glanced at the region beyond the ford and the pond, where I had seen another crowd, the reserve, if they had military skill enough to understand the need of a reserve. But I was more of the opinion

that they were in the rear because there was not room for them on the peninsula. All this crowd were lying on the ground as though the shrapnel had been delivered into their midst.

It is doubtful whether these particular Indians had ever seen a cannon of any size, or heard the report of one. This seemed to be the only solution of the mystery of the entire prostration of the enemy. I think if white men who had never heard the report of a cannon while standing within a few yards of it had been saluted as we waked up the Apaches, they would have been equally terrified, though they might not demonstrate in just the manner of these savages.

"I reckon they think they are all killed," said Ben, as we were waiting for the next move of the enemy. "I reckon they'll find out they ain't all done for."

He looked at the other twelve-pounder. He had told me before that it was loaded with a shell. This would be still another experience, if we were compelled to fire it. But they were too near to allow this missile to be used with the greatest effect. Just then one of the men at the end of the line, next to Upper River, fired his gun. An Indian in the act of rising was seen to drop back again.

"Hyer, man," called Ben. "Don't strike a man when he's down; and don't shoot an Indian when he's on the ground. Don't fire no more till I do."

"The man was getting up," replied Linn Hoover, who had fired the gun.

"Let 'em git up ef they want to. Ef they don't behave theirselves arter they git up let 'em have some more," added Ben.

There was a general lifting of heads about this time ; and it was not so long a time as the reader may suppose by the space the description has required ; and it might have been counted in seconds rather than minutes. The Apaches looked around them as they lifted their heads. Possibly they had experienced an earthquake ; but now they appeared to think the end of the world had come. They acted as though they had their doubts about anything here below. We watched them with curiosity and interest. Perhaps if we had opened fire upon them with our small arms the illusion would have been destroyed, and they would have renewed the attack.

I doubt whether they supposed the awful report had been caused by us ; and very likely they thought we were as much paralyzed by the noise and the shock as they were. The fire from the breastwork had ceased, and the inference from their standpoint was not an unreasonable one.

I stated my views and suppositions to the Kentuckian. He was willing to believe that the silence of our weapons had produced this effect upon the Indians. If it was so, they would be likely to renew the attack as soon as they regained their self-possession. I did not like the result of my own reasoning. If the Apaches regarded the explosion as a freak of

nature, like an earthquake, or a water-spout, we had created no impression, and our work would all have to be done over again.

While we were thinking about it with this new suggestion before us, some of the Apaches nearest to the earthwork rose to their feet, they looked furtively around them, as though they expected something dire to occur. As nothing happened to them, and another explosion did not follow, the others took courage and got up also. There was a large number who could not get up.

Ben Cavendish was about to make a remark, when all at once the whole crowd in front of us took to their heels, as with one impulse, and ran with all their might to the region beyond the pond, the crowd there falling back to make room for them. Without counting them I judged that there were fifty men in front of the battery who had been disabled by shrapnel or bullets. Some were dead, and others were writhing with pain. We all stood up to look at them. We regarded the battle as ended for that day.

A confused murmuring sound came to our ears from the region of the pond. It was some minutes before we could make out what it was; it proved to be but the excited conversation of the Indians, who were doubtless discussing the event which had produced such an impression upon them. I would have given something considerable to have heard and understood what they said about it, for it would have aided us in

our arrangements for the future. We could not decide whether the shock was attributed to us, or whether it was regarded as a convulsion of nature which had produced the same effect upon us as upon them.

It was a fact that they had run away from their position in front of the breastwork. This looked as though they regarded us as the authors of the noise and commotion. That they had not renewed the attack when they found that they were not all killed, was another reason for taking the other view of the question. We were unable to settle the question by facts and logic, and we patiently waited the course of events.

As time placed a greater gap between the present and the great event, as they must have regarded it, the Apaches became more demonstrative, and the conversation to which we had been listening swelled into yells. Emile Pont and the other gunners had reloaded the piece discharged before the smoke cleared away, and it was ready for use again.

"I reckon they hain't got enough on't yit," said Ben, who was closely watching the actions of the enemy. "They behave jest as though they had a good deal more fight in 'em. I'm right sorry, jedge, we didn't talk more about the position of the guns, for that was a right smart idee of your'n to put the pieces over on the island. From that sou'east corner, we could have raked them awful with the artillery."

"I think so now; and believe in it even more strongly than at first."

"We could use the breastwork for a fence to keep the hosses in and have it for the infantry as long as we could stand it thar. Ef wus came to wus, we could have retreated from the works to the island, and knocked the bridge away behind us. Then the critters might have shoved those ahead on 'em into the cañon. We should be as safe over thar as though we were in the moon."

Ben had enlarged upon my idea, and I fully approved of all he said. Very likely we could have fought the battle with less slaughter than in our present position. While we were discussing this question the enemy were recovering their courage, and the first thing we knew Hal was struck by an arrow. It penetrated the fleshy part of his arm, and stuck in the wound it had made. He was the first of our party who had been hit; and the accident would not have occurred at this time if he had not been standing up watching the movements of the Indians.

"Never mind me, judge," said the brave boy, as he took hold of the arrow with his hand and tried to pull it out.

"But you must have that wound attended to at once, or it will give you trouble."

"Pull out the arrer; that's the only thing to do," said Ben, without taking his eyes off of what he was looking at outside of the battery.

Don Ramon said he had seen a good many such

wounds, and grasping the arm of Hal, he drew the arrow from the flesh, though it was all that Hal could do to keep from crying out so great was the pain. As the missile was withdrawn the blood spurted from the wound. But the Mexican amateur surgeon was ready for this, and tied his handkerchief tightly around the wounded arm.

He had hardly done so before Ben fired his long rifle. I had been so anxious about Hal that I had not seen what was going on in front of us for a few minutes. The Indians were wary, and were resorting to their own peculiar tactics. They had taken positions behind the trees, and in every nook and corner that would afford them shelter from our bullets.

"You had better go to the camp at the castle, Hal," said Don Ramon. "Juanita is a first-rate nurse, and she will dress the wound as well as any surgeon could do it."

"No, I thank you," replied Hal, as he picked up his double-barrelled gun. "I am not going to leave the field while there is anything going on."

"But you are wounded and can do no good here," added Don Ramon.

"The wound is in my left arm, and, with the breastwork for a rest, I can do my share of the work."

The brave boy refused to be persuaded to leave the battery. I saw the heads of a couple of Apaches thrust out from behind a bush at the bend of the

river on our left, and I was about to fire, when he discharged his piece. I saw an Indian leap as high as the top of the bush, and then fall over backwards down the precipice into the river. This was Hal's one-hand shot.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

A SHELL FROM NO. 2. — ITS EFFECT UPON THE INDIANS. — A THOROUGH ROUT. — DEEPENING THE IMPRESSION. — A MARCH ON THE BLUFF. — A WEEK OF TRANQUILLITY. — EXPLORING THE SILVER MINE. — A RICH TREASURE. — EXAMINING THE COUNTRY. — ANOTHER SILVER MINE. — CAUGHT IN A BAD PLACE. — ASCENDING THE BLUFF. — AN ALARM. — GREAT GUNS AGAIN. — BEN CAVENDISH TO THE RESCUE. — A BOLD PUSH.

RECKON tain't no use to fool no more with them critters," said the Kentuckian, evidently a little mad at the wound Hal received. "The varmints will stay hyer till next winter ef we don't send 'em off, and they kin stand this thing as long as we kin, ef they kin shoot us from behind the trees and rocks. Run out No. 2, Bridge."

I did not object. We could not uncover the Indians behind the trees and rocks with the twelve-pounder, but we could make them lonesome in a short time. Ben sighted the gun himself, while Pont stood at the lockstring. He had brought the gun to bear upon the crowd by the pond, and beyond it.

"Fire!" said Ben, quietly.

Emile Pont pulled the lockstring, and the roar of the gun reverberated among the mountains. We

were again enveloped in smoke. We heard the explosion of the shell, and the sound came from the place where the Indians were crowded together, just beyond the ford. As the sulphurous cloud rolled away, we discovered the Apaches running with all their might along the heights. They came out of their hiding-places, and the only business with them just then seemed to be to get as far as possible from the battery in the shortest space of time.

They were evidently satisfied by this time that we were the authors of the tremendous noise, and of the execution done by the gun. I was satisfied from this demonstration that they considered the former discharge of the cannon as an earthquake, or some other convulsion of nature, which was as terrifying and damaging to us as it was to them. In this way they probably explained our silence after the first shot.

"Give them another, Ben." I thought if we deepened the impression produced by the shell it would be economy of life in the end. If it kept them away from us, the sacrifice would be less than if they followed up the attack day after day during our stay. The Kentuckian sent another shell after them, which was prepared to explode after a longer interval. When it burst a terrific yell came to us from the hills. We watched the retreating horde as they fled along the plateau. They did not stop to pick up their dead and wounded, and in a short time they disappeared among the rocks, where we had skirmished

with them before when poor Jerry was killed. The mounted men led the way, and those on foot followed at a scarcely less speed.

"I reckon they won't want nothin' more to-day," said Ben, while we were watching the retiring foe. "I don't reckon they will come this way agin jest yet."

"I think it will be well to follow them up for a while, Ben."

"I was jest thinkin' o' that. If Sile will get out some o' the hosses, it will help the case to fire them guns over on the hill yender," added Ben. "Them critters think this thing can't be done nowhar but right hyer."

Sile Carter hitched a couple of the horses to each of the guns. The entire party then marched out of the battery, and moved in the direction the enemy had taken. The ground was strewn with the dead and wounded. When we reached the spot where the shell had burst, we found another lot who had been hit by the fragments of the destructive missile. We continued the pursuit for an hour, but we saw nothing more of the Apaches.

I had no doubt they were moving towards the village we had seen, and, taking the guns upon a hill, we discharged them with shell in the direction they had taken. The hills rang with the report of the pieces, and though we could not see any Indians, we were very sure that all within five miles could hear the noise we made. We returned to the camp.

"Do you think that will be the end of our fights with the Apaches, Ben? Will the discipline they have had satisfy them?"

"I reckon that ain't the eend on't. Them critters will get used to great guns arter a while, jest the same as anybody does. But they won't bother us any more jest now," replied the Kentuckian.

"What will they do next?"

"They'll be sneakin' round hyer from this out, and when they kin kotch a man or a hoss outside of the camp they'll take keer on him. I reckon we've got to keep our eyes peeled all the time, night and day."

All hands went to work on the new battery at the southeast corner of Castle Hill, and before night we had the guns in position to repel an attack if any was made. We kept a guard at the old battery, and that was where we were to meet in case the Indians appeared again. From the island battery we could rake the spot where the Indians would approach the hill on which our horses were pastured.

The next day we explored the cave in the side of the cañon. Don Ramon was confident that we had found a very valuable silver-mine; and we continued our examination until we had obtained abundant evidence of the fact. We procured many valuable specimens of the quality of the ore, and not a few lumps of the pure metal.

We could not carry our investigations so far as we desired, for it was necessary to conceal our operations from the men. But we had all the evidence we

needed, and the future fully justified our opinions in regard to the value of the mine. Whether it was an old or a new one made no difference to us.

Our mission was really accomplished, and we were ready to continue our journey into Chihuahua; but we did not deem it prudent to leave in the present unsettled condition of the country. The Apaches, Don Ramon had learned, were doing a great deal of mischief. Those we had beaten off would never rest until they had revenged their repeated defeats at our hands.

It was our position quite as much as the guns which had given us the success we had obtained; and we could not get out of this region without exposing ourselves to many perils. Traps and snares would be set for us when we undertook to move. We had plenty of provisions, and the feed for the horses could not have been better. For a week we hunted and fished, and explored the neighborhood of Castle Hill.

Not far from the spot where Jerry had fallen we found strong indications of silver, though it was not as promising as the mine in the cañon. We saw no Indians, and we had the groves all to ourselves. But this tranquil state of things was not to last.

Just after breakfast one day, while I was walking with the boys near the projecting cliff, half a mile from the outer battery, as we called the one where we had fought our battle, we heard the blast of the sentinel's horn. This was the danger call.

"Do you see anything, Ned?"

"I do," replied Ned, with no little excitement in his manner. "The Indians are pouring up the side of the cliff on Upper River!"

We were in a bad box; for our retreat to the castle was cut off. The water had fallen considerably since we came into the locality. I had noticed a place a few rods from the earthworks where I thought an ascent of the bluff could be made at low water. But I had not concerned myself about it, for the place was outside of our lines. It was a kind of descending shelf, though it was not wide enough for two persons to stand abreast upon it. There was a break in it which I thought must render it impassable to the enemy.

As I could not see that anything was to be gained by the enemy if they used this possible means of reaching the ground in front of the old battery, I had given but little attention to it. Even now, it looked as though the boys and myself were to be the only sufferers by the approach in this direction. We had been caught on the wrong side of the battery.

The Apaches were crowding one another up the steep path, but they could move only in single file. Our position on the projecting bluff enabled us to see all that was done on Castle Hill, and on Burial Hill. Our men were rushing to the outside battery, except the gunners, who repaired to the new works on the island.

"What shall we do, boys? We haven't a ghost of

a chance to get back into the battery while the Apaches are in possession of the ground in front of it."

"Ben will soon clean them out," replied Ned, as he examined the lock of his gun.

"But if they retreat in this direction, as they are likely to do, we can't take care of the whole of them."

"We must let Ben Cavendish see that we are here," said Ned. "He will look out for us then."

"If we make any signals to attract the attention of those in the batteries, we shall notify the Indians that we are here at the same time."

"I think we might as well begin to reduce the number of Apaches at once," added Hal, as he raised his gun.

"Don't fire, Hal. That will only let the villains know that we are here. They may not see us, for they are too busy watching the battery."

"The only way we can get out of the scrape is to run for the ford or go around through the cañon, three miles down," added Hal.

"Very likely there is a force of Apaches approaching in this direction," suggested Ned.

At this moment one of the twelve-pounders waked the echoes of the hills, and a great cloud of smoke rolled in between us and the castle. The Indians were waiting till they had enough up the path to make an attack on the battery. Probably they had discovered that the great guns had been removed

from the earthworks in front of them. But the guns were in position to do them vastly more damage now than before.

The smoke rolled away, and we discovered that the Indians had retreated. Half a dozen of them lay on the ground in front of the battery; but the gun was too much for them. As Ned suggested, some of the Indians had retreated towards the plateau, and I saw five of them standing on the bluff by the pond. They were looking at the battery, and so far they had not seen us. We concluded that it would be prudent for us to lie down, and we did so.

"Ben has seen us!" exclaimed Hal, with his gaze fixed on the outside battery.

I looked and saw the Kentuckian, followed by ten of the hunters, leap over the earthwork, and move towards the ford. We afterwards learned that Buck Sykes had seen us on the projecting cliff, and had notified Ben of the fact. As Ben came out of the battery, I saw a man run over the bridge, and hasten to the island works.

Ben and his party had no sooner appeared outside of the battery than the Indians who had concealed themselves rushed towards them. He and his little band fired upon them, and then rushed towards the pond. As soon as they were out of the way, and the Apaches were gathering for another strike, the second twelve-pounder sent a shrapnel in among them. The Indians over the pond bent their bows. Before they could draw them the boys and I fired into them.

CHAPTER XL.

APPROACHING THE CAMP.—THE EFFECT OF THE GREAT GUNS.—BEN OPENS FIRE.—THE INDIANS IN THE STEEP PATH.—A HIDEOUS YELL IN THE REAR.—SWARMS OF APACHES.—AN ORGANIZED ATTACK.—A BOLT FOR THE BATTERY.—NED WOUNDED.—A HIT IN THE HEAD.—THE ISLAND BATTERY AT WORK.—A STANDING ORDER.—ANOTHER HASTY RETREAT.—THE FAIR NURSE.—OUR MISSION ACCOMPLISHED.—A START.—ANOTHER ATTACK AND A ROUT.—ON THE SOUTHERN TRAIL.—THE LAST ASSAULT.—THE CAVALRY SQUADRON.—IN CHIHUAHUA.—THE RETURN TO BUENA VISTA.—CONCLUSION.

I FIRED first, and one of the five Indians over the pond fell. Hal and Ned fired at the same instant and another of them dropped. They looked behind them, and then the three ran in the direction of the projecting rock. We all had double-barrelled guns. We could deliver three more shots. By this time Ben Cavendish saw how the case was, and firing his long rifle, another of the five fell.

The other two halted, and looked behind them. They saw the Kentuckian following them, with his companions. Several of the men had aimed their guns at them. Suddenly they broke away, and ran at the top of their speed for the rocks on the other side of the trail.

"I reckon you hain't got no time to lose. jedge," shouted Ben, as he glanced at the state of things in front of the battery.

We hastened to him and his party; and the next thing was to get back into the camp. The discharge of the cannon had certainly not produced the same effect as before, though the Indians were not yet sufficiently trained to this sort of warfare to stand up against shrapnel and shells. They had retreated at the first fire, but they were gathering again.

We felt comparatively safe now that we had joined the party which had come to our relief. The Apaches were still climbing the difficult path from Upper River, though their progress had been checked by the first gun from the island battery. There was now about twenty gathered in front of the earthworks, and their number was increasing every minute, as more came up the steep ascent. Of course they would not permit us to pass unharmed in front of them into the camp.

Ben conducted us to a position by the pond, where we halted. The Apaches in front of the battery paid no attention to us; they were too intent upon the plunder of our camp to look in any other direction. The men who remained behind the earthworks opened fire upon the enemy.

"I reckon we mought as well do our share in this work," said Ben, as he raised his rifle and fired. "There won't be any less on 'em till we make 'em less.

Take good aim, boys, and knock 'em over as they come up."

Ben had done this himself, for the instant he fired the Indian who was landing from the path dropped back upon those behind him. His fall seemed to derange the order of the march, for we heard a great deal of shouting, and probably the man fell on the others who were ascending. For a little time no more were added to the number in front of the battery.

"That worked well, Ben. We will follow it up." But I could see no new-comer to aim at.

While we were looking for our chance we heard the most tremendous yelling behind us that had yet greeted our ears. I judged from the sound that it must have been made by hundreds of the enemy, for it seemed to come from a considerable area, instead of being concentrated in one spot.

"Thar they come by the million," said Ben, as he took a survey of the country behind us. "I reckon we must git up and git for we are atwixt tew fires. What on airth is Buck Sykes doin' ? He ought to clear the way for us, as I told him to do when he saw we were ready to come in. Thar ! he's at it."

The last remark was called forth by the discharge of one of the guns in the island battery. The yelling in our rear continued and increased in volume and nearness. We began to understand that this was an organized attack, and that the party which had come up from the river was only a sort of line of skir-

mishers, to prepare the way for the real attacking force, which was to come down from the plateau.

"Now bolt for the camp!" shouted Ben, the instant the gun had been discharged, and the smoke was rolling along the space occupied by the enemy. "Do it in a hurry."

The Kentuckian led the way, and we followed him as fast as we could, though his long legs gave him an immense advantage over us. I kept the boys in front of me, for I was very much concerned about their safety. I was leaping over the body of a writhing Indian who had been struck by the scattering missiles in the shrapnel, when I saw Ned pitch forward, and fall upon the ground. My heart was in my mouth, but I picked the boy up, and carried him in my arms over the breastwork without waiting to see where he was hit.

I laid him on the ground, and I saw that there was blood on his head. Suddenly he sprang to his feet as though he was ashamed of giving up while there was any life left in him. He put his hand to his head, and I saw that the blood was flowing freely from a wound just over his right ear. He took out his handkerchief, and tied it around his head before I had time to say or do anything.

"I'm all right, judge!" exclaimed he, as he began to unsling his breech-loader, for he had lost his double-barrelled gun in his fall. "I was hit by something, but it wasn't a bullet or an arrow."

"Hyer, jedge? We want every shot now!" called

Ben, when he saw that Ned wasn't killed. "We hain't got no time to bury dead men."

"See them pouring down from the plateau!" said Ned, as he ran to his station at the breastwork.

The ground was covered with Indians as far as we could see, though that was not far. It seemed to me that Ben Cavendish had his doubts in regard to the result of the engagement. The enemy exhibited a determination they had not shown before, and were crowding with all their might towards the breastwork. Our men fired as rapidly as possible, and the Indians were dropping in front of us at every shot.

The island battery was separated from us only by the cañon, and when the space in front of us was crowded with the enemy Ben called to Buck Sykes to keep up a steady fire. Both of the twelve-pounders were discharged as soon as he gave the order. A horrible yell rent the air as the smoke rolled across the cañon, and enveloped the savages in its folds.

"Hold your fire!" called Ben. "'Tain't no use to fire when you can't see nothin'. Keep your eyes peeled, and don't let 'em git over the battery." As the smoke passed away from the front of us we saw that the foe had retired, those who were able to do so, but a large number of them were lying on the ground dead or wounded.

Buck obeyed his orders to the letter, and he and Emile Pont, with the assistance of the vaqueros who had been trained to assist them, wheeled the guns so

as to cover the ground beyond the ford. They fired again, and again the Indians retreated, unable to stand up against the fearful destruction caused by the shrapnel. Another shot, and the shell burst in the midst of the fleeing foe. Ben did not interfere with the work of the island battery, and Buck continued to send shells after the retreating Apaches until not one could be seen.

It was clear that our work for that day, if not for the rest of our stay at Castle Hill, was done. It had plainly been the intention of the Indians to rush over the breastwork, and gain possession of the camp. If they had succeeded, not one of our number would have been left alive to tell the story.

"How is your head, Ned?"

"It feels pretty sore," replied the brave boy, who had not flinched during the action.

I found that he was very pale, and I conducted him to our quarters. Juanita came to his aid at once, and washed the blood from his head as skilfully as a surgeon could have done it. The wound looked as though it had been inflicted with a stone, or possibly by a blunted arrow. The Mexican maiden dressed the wound, applying some salve she carried with her. Ned declared that it felt better at once, but this was a compliment to the skill of the fair nurse, for at night he was feverish and delirious.

Hal had almost entirely recovered from his arrow-wound under the skilful treatment of Juanita; but his was only a flesh-wound, and he had the inspira-

tion of the fair girl to aid him. After we had attended to the wounded—and Ned was not the only one, for three of the men had been hit by arrows—we went out of the battery to take a survey of the scene of the conflict. Two-thirds of those on the ground were only wounded, and we had seen several of them limping away in the direction taken by the main body. We had buried the dead left after the former engagement, and we did the same in this instance. We put the wounded into one of our wagons and hauled them a considerable distance in the direction of the Apache village. We left them near a brook that flowed into the cañon we had passed through; and the next day we found that their friends had taken them away.

The next day Ned was clear-headed, but he suffered a great deal of pain, and Juanita insisted that he should not leave his bed in the caravel. But good care restored him in a week, and at the end of two weeks he was as good as new.

The time began to pass monotonously on our hands, and after we had been five weeks at Castle Hill we decided to resume our march. We had accomplished the purpose for which we came. Don Ramon was anxious to return to his home and look after his affairs, for he had already exceeded the time he meant to be absent. On the high ground the feed and the water were getting rather scanty. We made our preparation for the departure.

When we crossed the cañon we dropped the mate-

rial of which the bridge had been built into the chasm. During the last days of our stay I had superintended the building of a platform at each end of the caravel, whereon were mounted the two twelve-pounders. They were lashed in such a way that they were not disturbed by the motion of the caravel. Our stock of provisions had been so far reduced that we could spare the space.

As Ben had predicted, we had hardly passed out of our strong position before we were conscious that the Apaches were hovering about us. When we entered the ford of the Gila, they made an attack upon us; but a couple of shots from the twelve-pounder in the rear end of the caravel routed the foe; and they discovered that the "big thunder" went with us wherever we went.

We had no further trouble from Indians in this vicinity. But when we struck the southern trail we found that the Apaches were doing a vast deal of mischief. One day a large band of them came down upon us. We halted, and loaded up the great guns, and as they swept down upon us we poured a charge of shrapnel into them. But these Apaches had evidently seen and heard great guns before. They did not like them, but being mounted they retreated a short distance, and seemed to be gathering up for another onslaught, when a cloud of dust indicated the approach of another party of mounted men.

Ben loaded one of the guns with a shell, and let them have that. He saw two of the riders fall from

their horses. Suddenly they wheeled and dashed off at a furious speed. As the other party drew near we were delighted to see that it was a squadron of United States cavalry. The lieutenant in command was amazed at the report of artillery ; and then told us that a portion of his command had had their horses stampeded the night before by the band who had attacked us. He could not stay for a long parley, and they dashed off in pursuit of the Indians, who were still in sight.

Our route now lay to the southward ; and these were the last Indians we saw. A week later we were in the city of Chihuahua, where we spent a week. It was useless to attempt to do anything with the silver mine while the country was in such a disturbed state.

Hal was not disposed to return to Buena Vista at first. He was too fond of the society of Juanita to be content to take to the trail again. But Hal was a different boy from what he had been when we set out in search of the silver mine. He had been wounded, and as he was always plucky, he soon became as great a favorite among the men as Ned was.

On our return we were encountered by one large band of Apaches. They were not frightened off by our guns, and we retreated to the caravel, where we fired upon them in safety ourselves with the small arms, while the twelve-pounders blazed away at them until they could stand it no longer. We kept them so far from us that we did not even lose a horse.



PURSUIT OF THE APACHES. — Page 342.

Figure 1 shows a 10x10 grid of 100 small circles, each containing a number from 0 to 9. The numbers are arranged in a pattern that resembles a random distribution, with some numbers appearing more frequently than others.

We crossed several rivers in the caravel, and those who had laughed the loudest at it in the beginning were the warmest in its praise in the end. We were cordially greeted on our return to Buena Vista by Captain Wilkinson. In a few days everything was moving in its ordinary channel at the ranch.

I persuaded Ben Cavendish to take a ranch and try to lead a civilized life. He was my neighbor as long as I remained in California, and for aught I know he is still there. The hunters scattered when our mission was accomplished, and I have no means of knowing what became of them. Sile Carter remained on the ranch, and became its proprietor when I left.

For various reasons we did not attempt to work the mine we had discovered for several years. Then we formed a stock company; and though the boys prefer to remain in California, Hal soon went back to Chihuahua, and Juanita became his wife, as I have stated before. The mine yields a handsome income, and I have no doubt the boys will be able to live in an eastern city when they tire of California.

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